THE INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT WEEKLY

MCV

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THE MAGAZINE FOR THE INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRY

Issue 352 Friday September 2 2005 **£3.25**

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A look at who is behind the device and its chances

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What future does the PC format have in games?

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Rod Cousens' first interview since joining Codemasters

EVERY BUYER ● EVERY BRANCH ● EVERY INDIE ● EVERY WEEK

INCORPORATING CTW

Weekly chart data looks set to return

Changing retail landscape and pressure from subscribers means real numbers for Q4

by Lisa Foster

THE UK games market looks set to regain full weekly sales research in time for the key Christmas season, *MCV* can exclusively reveal.

It's been five years since ChartTrack dropped individual game data from its weekly reports, rendering them virtually redundant according to many publisher bosses.

The research firm was forced to 'dumb down' due to pressure from several key data-supplying retailers, who felt that their own level of business was becoming transparent, particularly on new releases.

But now, with the emergence of supermarkets in the sector meaning that sales are spread wider across the High Street, ChartTrack and copyright owner ELSPA are planning to reintroduce weekly data during Q4.

"Things are looking very encouraging," ELSPA director general Roger Bennett told *MCV*. "The issue at the minute is something that ChartTrack and BARD are currently looking at together.

"Certainly it's something that we as an industry are desperate to see again. Access to weekly sales data is something that we've wanted to see return for a long, long time.

> *"This is something we desperately need as an industry, regardless of how individual companies – retailers or publishers – feel about it."*
>
> ***Roger Bennett, ELSPA***

This is something we desperately need as an industry, regardless of how individual companies – retailers or publishers – feel about it."

The news will no doubt be welcomed by most within the industry. Unlike many other entertainment sectors, the games industry as a whole has been unable to promote, for example, the opening weekend sales of a blockbuster title.

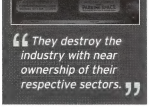
For individual publishers, too, the valuable weekly data will allow them to celebrate successes – and to keep a close eye on the performance of their rivals.

A full report on ChartTrack data appears on pages 36-37

THE NATION IS HOOKED on the TV series in which "one is a junkie, one is a liar, one is a murderer... and one is a rather attractive, brave doctor". And now a game of the drama Lost is in the pipeline, *MCV* can exclusively reveal. "Lost is a great licence, ideally suited to gaming," said a Touchstone Television spokesperson. "I can confirm that we're looking into the possibility of a video game." The TV series kicked off on Channel 4 three weeks ago, with the second series about to be broadcast in the US.

SPECIAL REPORT

EA, Sony, Future and GAME are The Untouchables. Can their rivals really come close to competing with them? *Page 31*



"They destroy the industry with near ownership of their respective sectors."

Play.com eyes City listing

Growth for Amazon's rival ● Upbeat games industry vision underpins City ambitions

by Stuart Dinsey

AMBITIOUS online retailer Play.com is considering a flotation by spring next year, which could be valued at around £50 million.

City sources told *MCV* this week that the company has been briefing potential underwriters for some time, whilst keeping a close eye on the economy and mood towards both the games market and new listings in general.

"The feeling is that with new formats coming and a new confidence in online businesses, thanks to Lastminute's success, Play could be nearing the perfect time to move," said one analyst.

Play.com has had a major impact on the entertainment retail sector in just a few short years. It has used the fact that it was founded in Jersey to exploit a loophole that avoids VAT, driving consumer awareness and market share largely via price.

As well as games, Play.com sells DVDs, music, books, gadgets and ringtones.

Having advertised on TV for the first time last Christmas, it is likely to promote itself heavily again through Q4 as it looks to increase its market share, estimated to be around three per cent of the UK games market.

The company, which has its entire buying team based in Cambridge, refused to comment.

MEDIA 20 COMMENT & ANALYSIS 28 RETAIL 35 RECOMMENDED 56 NEW RELEASES 60 CHARTS 64

DIGEST

[MCV IN A MINUTE]

Activision: *Ultimate Spider-Man* is the star of this week's Recommended retail section.

Atari: *Fahrenheit* is the pick of the bunch in this week's New Releases.

BBC: The Corporation is in no rush to roll out a game based on its ultra-succesful Doctor Who franchise.

Circle Studios: The UK developer headed up by Jeremy Heath-Smith has launched a new interactive DVD division.

ChartTrack: The industry research firm is planning to reintroduce weekly chart data during Q4.

Codemasters: The veteran *Sensible Soccer* brand is on its way to PS2.

Develop Conference: A new three-day event is being lined up to take place in Brighton next year.

EA: Paul Jackson re-iterates Electronic Arts' expected Q4 dominance of the charts.

Future: Michael French is named as the new editor at Edge Online.

GAME: CEO Lisa Morgan says it can't guarantee Xbox 360 pre-orders for all customers.

GE Magazines: The children's specialist launches new games mag Skillz.

GLU Mobile: Industry veteran Chris Meredith takes up a key role at the mobile games firm.

IFone: Three new faces join the mobile games specialist.

Impulse Music: The airport terminal entertainment chain has dropped games from its shelves.

Koch: Major expansion for the distributor as six new recruits are taken on.

Koei: Naoki Katashima and Mikey Foley join the publisher.

Konami: The publisher has struck a deal with Ben Sherman to promote *PES 5*.

Macrovision: Tom DuBois hits back at a Forbes report suggesting that publishers ignore piracy.

Microsoft: An investigation into the two-SKU approach to Xbox 360.

Nintendo: The games giant outlines its Q4 campaign to the trade.

Play.com: The online retailer is considering a flotation by Spring next year.

Sega: *Sonic Gems Collection* makes the cut for Recommended.

Sony: Is PSP the new Walkman? *MCV* investigates.

Sony: *EyeToy Kinetic* is featured in this week's Recommended section.

Touchstone: The TV giant has confirmed it is looking at a *Lost* video game.

Ubisoft: Jon Rosenblatt claims Ubisoft is the publisher best prepared for Xbox 360.

Ubisoft: *Rainbow Six Lockdown* is featured in Recommended.

VU Games: *The Incredible Hulk* is this week's Must Stock title for retail.

WH Smith: The High Street giant has confirmed that DS and GBA will be dropped from its stores.

Xplosiv: The publisher has taken top four spots in the PC budget charts.

Xplosiv: *Hello Kitty Roller Rescue* is Recommended this week.

NEWS

EA "hopes rivals will turn up"

Prospect of an EA-dominated Christmas is very real, says Paul Jackson ● FIFA leads surge of the Q4 power brands

by Stuart Dinsey

WITH THE RELEASE date firmly in place for what is likely to be the biggest selling *FIFA* ever, EA's head of northern Europe Paul Jackson has re-affirmed the giant publisher's belief that it could be facing less competition at retail this autumn.

Jackson has also hit back at those who criticise EA for relying on the return of key franchises year after year, pointing out that is a totally reasonable practice, with development quality and marketing support providing what both consumers and retailers demand come the last quarter. "I don't mean to sound arrogant, not at all. But it does seem that competition from our rivals, when it comes to the very biggest releases, will not be as strong this year," Jackson told *MCV*.

> *"It worries me that other publishers perform great one year and then seem to have exhausted themselves the next.*
>
> **Paul Jackson, EA**

EA'S GUNS BLAZE

Key titles from the market leader this Q4...

Burnout: Revenge	PS2, Xbox	Sep 16th
The Sims 2: Nightlife	PC	Sep 16th
FIFA 2006	PS2, Xbox, GC, PSP, DS, GBA, PC	Sep 30th
Tiger Woods PGA 2006	PS2, Xbox, GC, PSP, PC	Oct 7th
Battlefield 2: Modern Combat	PS2, Xbox	Oct 28th
Harry Potter: Goblet of Fire	PS2, Xbox, GC, PSP, DS, GBA, PC	Nov
Need For Speed: Most Wanted	PS2, Xbox, GC, PSP, DS, PC	Nov
James Bond: Russia With Love	PS2, Xbox, GC, PSP	Nov

Indies told: "Unite or die"

"WE FEEL SORRY for them, but they could do more to help themselves." That appears to be the message from the industry in response to calls of unfair play from indie retailers.

Whilst indies may feel victimised, there does appear to be widespread concern for their plight. "I have a great deal of sympathy for them," Koei's general manager David Hope told *MCV*. "They are a very important part of the business, and vital to us. Our titles are fairly niche and we rely on the hard work of indies."

Dean Harvey of Fire International added: "I feel sorry for them. The market is now catering for big industry. People are voting with their pockets and that must hurt."

However, many have confessed that a lack of unity within the indie community may be an issue.

"There should always be a place for good people on the market and it's awful to see so many decent and hard working indies fall by the wayside," a source at a major UK supermarket told *MCV*.

"However, if you look at other industries, such as the white goods sector, indie retailers have banded together through schemes such as Euronics and are managing to survive.

"But in the games industry, independent retailers have shunned any efforts to bring about any unity and have suffered as a result."

David Hope agrees: "If indies joined forces are were able to be treated as one large retailer, but with independent outlets, then it would be easier for publishers to help."

PJ: "We hope that others have powerful line-ups this Christmas"

New IP fades as sequels and licences dominate Christmas

LESS than 20 per cent of new releases in Q4 this year will be based on original IP.

With the stakes increasingly high for the industry's peak season, publishers are relying upon tried and tested franchises to secure sales success, with many following the hugely successful example of EA, which has a Q4 schedule which is exclusively franchised and licenced games (*see story, left*).

"I think there's room for both types of games," said a Nintendo spokesperson. "It is harder to break new IP, but in a way we've already done it with *Metroid Prime* on GameCube, and its success will no doubt continue on Revolution."

"Franchises are tried and tested and they're successful as we've shown with the Mario series," he added. "I think the sales figures reflect that the public aren't getting bored with franchised games yet."

"If you look at the rest of the year you'll probably see more new IP releases around Easter and in the summer – that's when *Brothers in Arms* and THQ's *Destroy All Humans* have been so successful," added a Ubisoft spokesperson. "I don't think its difficult to break new IP, it's just that at this time of year publishers seem to back their winners. That's why you're seeing the likes of *FIFA*, *King Kong* and *Harry Potter* all released at the same time."

"We hope for the sake of the industry that other publishers have powerful line-ups and very much turn up this Christmas. My sense at the moment is that they're not."

Jackson's comments reiterate those of global corporate communications VP Jeff Brown, who recently noted that "to be honest, there isn't much competition in the holiday season this year." *(MCV 20/7)*.

EA's biggest seller this year is likely to be *FIFA 2006* by some distance. Already winning critical approval, it will have an unprecedented run at retail by arriving earlier than usual, from Friday September 30th. Other key releases largely comprise well known names, such as *Burnout: Revenge*, *Tiger Woods PGA 2006*, *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, *Need For Speed: Most Wanted* and *James Bond: From Russia With Love*.

"EA has got itself into a position of being able to deliver hits every year. It worries me that others perform great one year and then seem to have exhausted themselves the next," added Jackson

"As for the same franchises returning, people don't expect the Premier League to deliver a new sport every year. We have a massive amount of innovation going into our products, with thousands of people working in development.

"Just because they aren't all new names isn't any reason to criticise us. We deliver excitement for consumers, that's why they buy our products. And the potential this year for retail is just staggering."

Electronic Arts: 01932 450000

[ALL FORMATS] TOP 10

Week ending August 20th
Source: ChartTrack/ELSPA

1.	**BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005** CODEMASTERS. PS2, XBOX, PC	
2.	*MADAGASCAR*, PS2, XBOX, DS, GBA	ACTIVISION
3.	*FANTASTIC 4*, PS2, XBOX, GBA, GC	ACTIVISION
4.	*ANCER*, PS2, XBOX, PC	THQ
5.	*CRICKET 2005*, PS2, XBOX, PC	EA
6.	*CHARLIE: CHOC FACTORY*, PS2, XBOX, PC, GBA	TAKE 2
7.	*GTA: SAN ANDREAS*, PS2, XBOX, PC	ROCKSTAR
8.	*WOW: EUROPEAN ASSAULT*, PS2, XBOX, GC	EA
9.	*PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4*, PS2, XBOX, PC	KONAMI
10.	*DESTROY ALL HUMANS*, PS2, XBOX	THQ

[PRE ORDERS] TOP 10

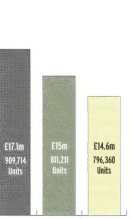
Week ending August 20th
Source: Amazon

1.	**XBOX 360 CONSOLE DELUXE PACK** MICROSOFT. XBOX 360	
2.	*SONY PSP*, PSP	SONY
3.	*SONY PSP CONSOLE BUNDLE + 4 GAMES*, PSP	SONY
4.	*SONY PSP CONSOLE BUNDLE + 4 GAMES*, PSP	SONY
5.	*SONY PSP CONSOLE BUNDLE + 1 GAME*, PSP	SONY
6.	*SONY PSP CONSOLE BUNDLE + 1 GAME*, PSP	SONY
7.	*SONY PSP CONSOLE BUNDLE + 2 GAMES*, PSP	SONY
8.	*SONY PSP CONSOLE BUNDLE + 2 GAMES*, PSP	SONY
9.	*THE SIMS 2: NIGHTLIFE*, PC	EA
10.	*RIDGE RACER*, PSP	SONY

amazon.co.uk

[MARKET VALUE] £19.5m

Total UK Software Sales
Source: ELSPA/ChartTrack and Intent Media



Big Three promise Xmas cheer

SONY, MICROSOFT and Nintendo this week were united in expecting a bumper Christmas sales period as the trade welcomed PSP and whetted its lips for the arrivals of Micro and Xbox 360.

Hundreds of midnight openings to mark the September 1st launch of PSP signalled a long-awaited turning point in retail's fortunes after a torrid year which has seen the biggest multiples hit hard and some of the smallest indies fell by the wayside.

For both Sony and Nintendo, the message to the trade was one of opening up the market to brand new audiences via their respective handheld systems.

"It's going to be a bumper Christmas," SCEUK boss Ray Maguire told *MCV*. "I'm looking forward to speaking to consumers who we've never spoken to before. There are great reasons for gamers to go to the shops."

"We're hoping to bring a little Christmas cheer," said Nintendo UK boss David Yarnton. "Nintendo has had a very busy, big year so far but there's much more to come."

MAGUIRE, YARNTON & LEWIS: Just look at those smiles

Microsoft, meanwhile, is flatout preparing for the launch of the two versions of Xbox 360, expected this November.

"I think it's going to be a really exciting Christmas," head of Microsoft Europe Chris Lewis told MCV. "There's a lot happening, not just from us, but from other platform holders and different device types."

[LEADER]

Welcome to the next generation of MCV

WELCOME to the new look issue of *MCV*. If you're picking this up at Games Market Europe, or spilling tea over it on Friday morning, we hope you'll take the time to leaf through the new magazine and take in all of the new features we've added and the tweaks we've made to the old format.

It's the first time since *MCV* launched in 1998 that it's received such a dramatic face-lift. And the reason we've been nipping and tucking in the background to put together this radical new style for the industry's weekly trade publication is to better serve the needs of today's market.

> *Consider this as the next-gen MCV. Sleeker, smarter broader - but still the same mag you can trust. And only one SKU.*

MCV was launched to provide the trade with an indispensable weekly resource of comprehensive information and agenda-setting news, features and opinion from all areas of the business.

For those of you who've been here since the beginning (and looking at some of the receding hairlines and deepening 'laughter lines' in this office, there are a few here), the industry has undergone a staggering process of evolution to bring us to where we are today, on the cusp of the next generation. Consider this as the next-gen *MCV*. Sleeker, smarter, broader - but still the same brand you can trust. And only one SKU.

A key new addition is our Opinion and Analysis spread *(pages 28-29)*. This weekly section will feature provocative views from the industry's movers and shakers – this week including SCEE's Phil Harrison, City insider and Lodestar managing director Nicholas Lovell and Future's Greg Ingham. Elsewhere, veteran Rod Cousens speaks to *MCV* in his first full interview since joining the Coders *(pages 46-47)*.

If you have any thoughts on the new format - good or bad (don't panic, it can still accommodate photos of Garry Williams) - drop us a line.

It's your magazine after all.

Johnny.Minkley@intentmedia.co.uk

NEWS

360: What do we tell customers?

Retailers and game publishers alike becoming frustrated as Q4 looms and definitive launchplan for 360 fails to materialise

by Neil Long

WITH MICROSOFT offering a wall of silence on the Xbox 360 launchdate and Euro allocation, senior industry figures can speculate on the arrival of the new console – but they can't plan.

"We're not guaranteeing anybody anything for day one," said GAME chief executive Lisa Morgan.

"All we've done is put some information in-store telling people it's coming."

Many game publishers would like to see an early November launch.

"A lot of people are saying it might be within the first two weeks of the month, and you'd think November 11th would make the most sense from a marketing perspective," said Codemasters' head of communications Max Everingham. "It's a nice figure and it would be hitting before Thanksgiving Day in the US."

Ubisoft's marketing director Jon Rosenblatt agrees: "I think Microsoft will try and get it out as early in November as they can. But they won't want to disappoint gamers by not having enough at launch, so if this means holding back until late November then I'm sure they wouldn't actually be too concerned."

Retail also warns that the later 360 launches, the more difficult it will be to make the most of Christmas.

"Every week that goes by in November is a load of lost sales. They've got to pull their finger out," said one buyer.

Boy gamers get mag

A NEW GAMES title aimed at pre-teen boys is being launched by children's magazine specialist GE Magazines.

Skillz will hit the news-stands on September 21st.

Edited by Joff Brown, formerly of *PSW*, the multi-format magazine will be targeted at boys aged 8-14 years-old. Each issue will come with a free gift; the first issue featuring a free mini radio, plus a giant Spider-Man poster. Cover price is £2.99, with a print-run set at 175,000 copies.

"*Skillz* is about giving kids exactly what they want from a games magazine," offered Brown.

"We've built it from the ground up to cater for the needs of today's young gamers. *Skillz* channels the enthusiasm and energy of a new generation of game fan, making it easily the coolest and most accessible specialist games mag on the shelves today."

GE Magazines: 020 7468 5685

Nintendo plan impresses

Epic Nintendogs push spearheads 'broadest ever ' Q4 campaign targeting 40m consumers ● 50 per cent year-on-year growth predicted, to 'cement handheld leadership' ● New Mario bundle for GameCube

by Johnny Minkley

AS THE PSP launches across Europe this week, an unfazed Nintendo has come out fists first, detailing its "broadest ever peak season campaign" at a stylish Christmas-themed event attended by 250 key members of the trade in central London.

Following SCEE studio boss Phil Harrison's dismissal of DS as a 'gimmick' and the competition from Nintendo handhelds as 'irrelevant' (*MCV 26/8*), the firm rallied behind its portable triumvirate of GBA SP, DS and Micro, promising the trade it will "cement our handheld leadership" in Q4.

Nintendo's Euro president Satoru Shibata revealed that the firm expected to achieve a massive 50 per cent year-on-year growth in handheld by the year-end. He added that Nintendo expected to sell through three million DS units in Europe by that time – including one million in the UK alone.

To achieve this growth, Nintendo is throwing weight behind its reputation for innovation – its Q4 campaign spearheaded by a massive push for crucial DS title *Nintendogs*.

Marketing director Dawn Paine outlined an extensive campaign, including a televised ferry-crossing of the first shipment of the title to "dramatise the launch", with branded trains delivering it across the UK, TV sponsorship of Channel 4 show *It's Me Or The Dog*, the UK's first 'Puppy Party' and a tie-up with the Dogs Trust.

A campaign for the new Micro console, which launches on November 4th, will focus on 'fashion and portability', targeting celebrities, glossy magazines, fashion shows and shops, while the GBA SP will be positioned as an 'entry level' system.

"We created portable gaming – we're not moving out of it," insisted UK boss David Yarnton.

Meanwhile, bouncing back from the slip of its flagship *Zelda* title into 2006, Nintendo is pinning its GameCube hopes on *Mario Smash Football*, revealing a new autumn bundle comprising the game and a limited edition pearl white console to celebrate the plumber's 20th birthday.

Nintendo: 01932 895 390

A MATTER OF HANDHELD FACT

Nintendo doesn't fear Sony in the numbers game...

- Total Nintendo handheld sales are up a staggering 91 per cent year-on-year in the UK market
- Nintendo handhelds account for 38 per cent of UK hardware sales in 2005
- DS has sold through six million units worldwide
- The pink GBA SP has accounted for a quarter of all SP sales this year
- Since launch, DS has outsold PSP by up to three times in Japan
- By the end of '05, NoE predicts total Nintendo handheld hardware and software sales will have been worth £250m in the UK alone

Sensi shoots for PS2

CODEMASTERS looks set to bring back *Sensible Soccer*, with a mid-price release on PS2 planned for next year.

The move would be part of the veteran British games publisher's plan to make the most of its historical brands.

It has already announced the return of the much-loved football franchise via its new mobile division headed up by Matt Davies. This will be on Symbian OS smartphones, alongside other old favourites *Cannon Fodder* and *Psycho Pinball* from Q3 next year.

A full console version, however, should go down well with the army of fans who still remember the Amiga and Mega Drive versions fondly from the early 1990s.

In truth, screenshots have never done justice to this classic

Meanwhile, Codemasters also confirmed this week that *Operation Flashpoint: Elite* will arrive on Xbox this November.

Codemasters: 01926 814134

Xplosiv start for budget label as big hits arrive

XPLOSIV kicked off its new range of £19.99 games by claiming the top four places in the official ChartTrack PC budget charts last week.

International Cricket Captain: Ashes Year 2005, the first of Xplosiv's new premium titles had previously held the top spot before being knocked off last week by *Sonic 3D*, with *Microsoft Flight Simulator '98* and *Big Mutha Truckers* following at three and four.

"If you're going to be knocked off the top spot, you want it to be your own product, and *Sonic 3D* is a title that has continually sold well for us," said Xplosiv general manager James Spice.

"*Cricket Captain* is our first £19.99 premium price product on the PC, and we've also got *Hello Kitty* and *Taito Legends* on the way. These £19.99 titles give us scope for more of a marketing spend, as you'll see with *Hello Kitty* and in the coming months, and with *Taito Legends*, which has had a great response so far."

"The Xplosiv brand now represents three price points: £4.99, £9.99 for republishing and £19.99 for new release titles," added Spice. "And we've got more deals in the pipeline for each range."

Xplosiv: 020 8343 7337

SPICE: Chart action to continue with Hello Kitty and Taito title

NEWS

Pressure on studios as Atari maps future

US and Europe businesses could consolidate ● Development overhaul continues ● Now Riccitiello name in rumour-mill

by Stuart Dinsey

Former EA boss Riccitiello has eyed Atari investment

FAR FROM any rumoured break-up, Atari hopes to complete the consolidation of its business later this year then raise more money – but changes to its development landscape look set to continue.

Reacting to the recent speculation about a potential raid on the company by former CEO Jim Caparro *(MCV 17/6)*, senior insiders have dismissed the notion that Atari Inc in the US and Infogrames SA in France could potentially part company.

Indeed, it was stressed that moves are foot to consolidate everything under Atari Inc.

With debts having been reduced from $600m in 2000 to $100m now, and not due until 2009, Atari says it is in a good position to go forward.

> *We know we must do better. And our existing studios know that as well.*
>
> **Atari insider**

It knows, however, that further strategic investment will be required to fund that growth – with the likes of John Riccitiello's Elevation Partners amongst at least four firms to have expressed interest.

The company also realises that its software development policy has not really worked in recent times. Despite cuts already, increased pressure to perform will be put upon its existing studios such as Eden, Paradigm, Shiny, Reflections and Melbourne House.

"Many are interested in injecting money into Atari, but we're not selling the company. We will look to raise some capital after the consolidation. That's fairly easy," the senior source told MCV.

"We have already closed some studios. Not because we don't want to be in all sectors of the business, but because we know that we must do better. Our existing studios know that too."

Atari: 020 8222 9700

New budget label hits the Street

THE ALREADY bustling PlayStation 2 budget scene has gained a new arrival.

A publisher named 505 GameStreet quietly entered the European market during August with the release of four budget titles.

The label has already established distribution agreements with PDQ and Advantage as well as shelf space in several of the nation's multiples.

Shortly, the company will be releasing a range of budget PS2 titles priced at £9.99. 505 GameStreet plans to release around four titles a month in the run up to Christmas and is looking to full price titles in 2006.

"The key to our plan is the consistency and quality of our games," a company spokesperson told *MCV*.

"Our first 12 months' release schedule is signed off. We have a broad range of content including arcade, RPG and shoot-'em-up titles. We will be catering for all."

www.505gamestreet.com

Imagine in frame as Live closes

FOLLOWING the collapse of Live Publishing, the fate of its magazines and staff remains uncertain, with rumours of a possible buyout or title acquisitions.

Live's portfolio is unlikely to excite companies operating in its target markets. However, both Future and Imagine Publishing have publicly stated aims to expand by acquisition.

Live Publishing ceased operations last week after delaying the publication of the latest issue of *Retro Gamer*. *PC Extreme* had already been terminated shortly before.

"Live's collapse isn't a bad reflection of the gaming press," said Imagine boss Damian Butt. "There are specific circumstances surrounding Live, which operates very differently to us. It's certainly unfortunate news, but not a complete shock. They have some good titles that I'm sure will live on in one way or another. *PC Utilities*, for example, has been running for ages and has enjoyed reasonable sales."

In the meantime, several freelancers have expressed their determination to publish the ill-fated final issue of *Retro Gamer*, using the material they had previously withheld from Live following several months of non-payment.

Imagine boss Damian Butt states that some Live titles may still have a future

"What happened to the freelancers is a modern day scandal," Craig Vaughan, a former Live freelancer, told *MCV*. "The fanatical freelance staff of *Retro Gamer* are determined that their loyal fan base will be rewarded and we intend to release a final tribute issue of the mag toward the end of the year, either in print or on CD."

www.livepublishing.co.uk

BBFC forced to review guidelines

THE BBFC has reacted to several recent games scandals by revamping its guide on games classification – and warns that any publisher that ignores its importance may have to face the glare of the media spotlight.

The new booklet entitled *'The Classification of Video Games'* aims to clarify once and for all the BBFC's position on adult content in video games released in the UK.

"We're seeing more games coming to us than ever before," BBFC head of communications Sue Clark told *MCV*. "I think much of it is down to the reaction of the press, as if a game is rated voluntarily the publisher is blamed if there's any controversy."

The new revised guidelines also tackle new issues such as advertising in games.

BBFC: 020 7440 1570

"Why this collective need to meet and talk?"
Greg Ingham P28

Pressure mounts on 'Cube at retail

Next-gen machines put pressure on current formats ● GAME admits that it is reconsidering its strategy

by Ben Parfitt

AS MORE FORMATS flood the market in the run up to Christmas, GameCube is facing a genuine threat to its already limited presence on the High Street.

The news that *Zelda: Twilight Princess* has been delayed until 2006 has placed a huge, Mario-style smashable question mark over Nintendo's current console. "Shelf space is precious," GAME CEO Lisa Morgan explained to *MCV*. "*Zelda* was very important to us as far as 'Cube business was concerned. PS2 and PC are still absolutely massive for us. Game Boy is very important. With 'Cube, it really depends on our other strategies. The *Zelda* news is certainly a blow. We've not made a decision, but we will have to make it very shortly. It is tough."

Voices from the indie sector have backed up GAME's views. A source at one leading indie store told *MCV*: 'Cube will take a battering. It's become a niche platform and the *Zelda* delay will hurt it badly. The Nintendo faithful will buy it either way, of course, but the hardware sales that would have backed it up in the run up to Christmas have vanished."

> *The Zelda news is certainly a blow. We've not made a decision, but we will have to make it shortly.*
>
> ***Lisa Morgan, GAME***

Although fears for the GameCube are widespread throughout the industry, opinion is more divided about the future of Game Boy Advance, and even Xbox.

"Currently we're assessing the performance of PS2, Xbox, DS and GBA," WH Smith's Becky Oldlands explained. "The latter two will be making way thanks to lower returns. GBA sales in the last six months have not been as good as we might have hoped, and the DS is not where we would like it to be. We will also be scaling down the Xbox in time for the 360 launch."

The bottom line is that as an increasing number of machines compete for a finite amount of shelf space, formats will have to prove their worth by the value of their sales rather than the strength of their software, as Asda's Nick Chilcott explained: "Every format has to perform well to justify its space."

As new formats fight for shelf space, underperformers face the chop

Don McCabe of Chips added: "The 360 will take sales away from Xbox. It ran out and there are no more first party releases. The 360 is definitely a replacement format, whereas the PSP is an additional format."

Meredith gets sticky

GLU MOBILE, the new kid on the mobile-gaming block, is celebrating the appointment of a new vice president of publishing after successfully unsticking Chris Meredith from Majesco Europe.

The former Majesco MD played a large part in establishing the company's European offices and was involved in licensing deals estimated to exceed $25 million. "One of Glu Mobile's key assets has been the strength of our management team," stated Glu president Greg Ballard. "Chris is a proven industry expert and has joined us to help build Glu into the leading publisher of mobile entertainment."

Meredith has previously worked for companies such as SCEA, SCEE, MicroProse and 3Dfx Interactive and was integral to the formation of GameON Mobile. Meredith added: "It's an honour to be joining the company at such an exciting time in the evolution of mobile entertainment."

Chris Meredith joins Glu as the mobile revolution picks up speed

This evolution has also been recognised by US media behemoth Time Warner, who recently invested $7.5 million in Glu. Time Warner's Rachel Lam stated: "We are excited about this company's prospects and are delighted to help support the global expansion of an established industry leader that has a proven ability to develop high-quality games."

Glu: 020 7368 1122

Sherman shirt lift for Pro Evolution 5

EUROPE'S annual soccer showdown upped the pace this week, with Konami responding to recent EA activity, announcing it has scored a wide-ranging deal with clothing label Ben Sherman to promote forthcoming soccer sequel *Pro Evolution Soccer 5*.

Ben Sherman advertising will feature heavily across the various stadia in all versions of the title, while a number of limited edition promotions are planned, carrying Sherman and *Pro Evo* branding.

A Konami spokesperson told *MCV* that the Ben Sherman was designing a limited edition PSP carry case, featuring *PES* branding, that would be given to celebrities. The TV spot, featuring cover stars John Terry and Thierry Henry, was filmed at the weekend.

As revealed in MCV *(12/8)*, EA's rival *FIFA* series has secured a sponsorship deal with Sky Sports, and the publisher has brought the title's release forward to September 30th, preventing another head to head clash between the two franchises.

"This is a fanastic cross-promotion, and one that Ben Sherman has really thrown itself into," commented Konami Europe's Jon Murphy.

PES5 releases on PS2, Xbox and PC in October and PSP in November.

Konami: 020 8987 5730

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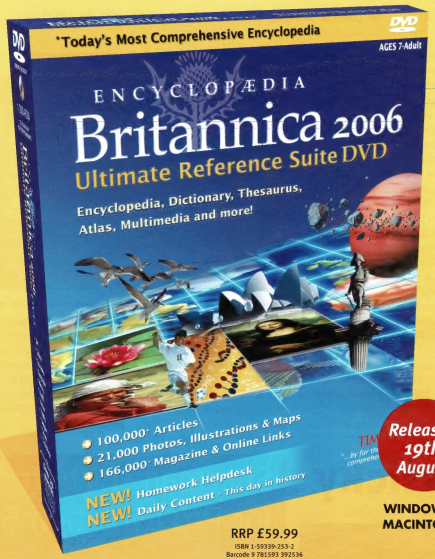

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Who knows what will happen to Doctor game?

A game based on the adventures of the Timelord will be coming ● But, strangely, the BBC appears to be in no rush to capitalise on one of its biggest properties

by Ben Parfitt

WIDGER (inset): "Getting a game out to coincide with Doctor Who programming is not a priority"

BEING a Time Lord, urgency is not something that greatly troubles Doctor Who – fortunate really, as the BBC has revealed that it is in no rush to sign the deal for the *Doctor Who* game licence.

Following the successful first series and an upcoming second series, many had presumed the BBC would be eager to capitalise on the licence as soon as possible. "We have to ensure that any potential *Doctor Who* game is right for the franchise, the characters and for fans of the series," the BBC Licensing team's Andy Widger told *MCV*.

"We have looked at concepts and had discussions with the industry but nothing has been signed. Getting a title out to coincide with *Doctor Who* programming is not a priority. Ensuring that the game matches the high production values of the show, has wide multi-national appeal and is a title that excites and interests publishers is."

Following the recent demise of publishing activity at BBC Multimedia, the licence for the game of the series is up for grabs by third parties.

"At the moment we cannot say what will happen either way," Widger continued. "*Doctor Who* has the potential for all sorts of licensing opportunities, of which gaming is only one. BBC broadcasting follows its own agenda and BBC Worldwide has to follow that."

The once tired TV brand has been catapulted back into the limelight following the hugely successful series from BBC Wales.

BBC Worldwide: 020 8433 2000

Impulse ditches games

Entertainment chain to focus on music and DVD as software margins decline

IMPULSE MUSIC, an entertainment chain located in train stations and airport terminals across the country, has dropped games from its shelves.

The company's focus is primarily CD and DVD sales, but it had previously boasted a games offering, too. However, reduced margins in the sector has meant Impulse is now ditching software.

"Games haven't been selling well for us and we've decided to pull out of the market completely," a senior source told *MCV*.

"Why on earth would we bother selling games when we can put other products on the shelves that actually make us money?"

The withdrawal has already taken place, with stock slowly being removed from the shelves over the last few months. "The games market is dominated by the big players and we're going to leave it to them to fight it out," the source added.

> *"Why on earth would we bother selling games when we can put other products on the shelves that actually make us money?"*

With games off its shelves, Impulse is, however, continuing to expand and has just opened a further three stores.

Impulse: 01462 677227

[IN BRIEF]

Sega readies for Q4
Sega has finalised its release schedule for the next few months following the release of PSP launch titles *World Snooker Challenge* and *Virtua Tennis* on September 1st. *Sonic Gems Collection* is set for a PS2 and GameCube release on September 30th, alongside *Rome: Total War* expansion pack *Barbarian Invasion* on PC. PS2, Xbox and GameCube title *Spartan: Total Warrior* joins them in stores a week later on October 7th.

Lovefilm loves games too
Online DVD rental service Lovefilm is to launch a games arm, kicking off with a selection of chart PS2 titles. The new service offers no late fees, no due back dates and free postage for the return of all games. The move into games comes following a Lovefilm survey in which 50 per cent of customers said they would like to rent games as well as films via the site.

Atari crashes onto PC
Crashday is to become the latest *Burnout*-style racer to hit gamers in February 2006. Developed by new teams Moon Byte and Replay Studios, Atari's new PC racer promises a wide range of race modes and dedicated online community when it skids into stores.

Trueplayerz go online
Joystick Junkies has teamed up with broadband ISP UK Online to bring gamers a series of Trueplayerz charity events. Trueplayerz offers fashion shows, live bands and DJs, with a gaming tournament thrown in, too. The events are penned in for September 25th, October 23rd and November 20th, and will be held at London's Marquee Club.

DIY kit for FPS gamers
UK development team The Game Creators has unveiled a new package for budding FPS designers. *FPS Creator* will give gamers the chance to construct their own 3D worlds complete with a choice of over 800 in game objects, enemies and weapons to choose from. The new title is set for a September 22nd release at £29.99 through the company's website.

NEWS

[IN BRIEF]

ASA raps VU
VU Games has received a sharp telling off from the Advertising Standards Authority over its viral video and email campaign for PS2 shooter *Cold Winter*. The promotion included emails with an attached video clip of character Andrew Sterling being tortured by Chinese interrogators. The ASA upheld several complaints, even though it does not usually get involved with viral campaigns.

PlayStation TV relaunches
FourTwentyFive.tv, Sony's online TV marketing channel, is set for a relaunch this October for three months following a successful trial period in December 2004. Around 100,000 people, viewing the channel's mix of animation and comedy, watched the broadcasts during the trial. FourTwentyFive will run for ten minutes each day, beginning at, yes you guessed it, 4:25pm.

Global campaign for 360
Microsoft is currently in the throws of thrashing out a global online marketing strategy for the upcoming Xbox 360. Due to kick off in the US in late autumn, Microsoft has commissioned AKQA, the same company behind the 360's interface design and the official Xbox360.com website, to create the campaign.

Time up for Atari
Atari has teamed up with fashionable watch designers Fossil to launch a limited edition range of watches sporting retro Atari graphics. Though the watches will obviously appeal most to the hardcore, Atari hopes they will assist the company to reach younger consumers. The range will include images from titles such as *Centipede*, *Breakout* and *Asteroids*.

In-game ads tee off
The burgeoning in-game advertising sector has taken another significant step forward with the news that sector specialist IGA is to launch its dynamic ads network through PC title *CustomPlay Golf*. The firm expects 30 titles, across PC and console platforms to be signed to the network by the end of the year.

Sea change for dev community as new Brighton event emerges

Conference and expo set for seaside UK location next summer ● Backed by *Develop*

By Stuart Dinsey

A NEW UMBRELLA event is being launched for the games development community, backed by the *Develop* brand and offering participation for everyone from senior industry execs to staffers and students.

The *Develop* Conference, located at the Hilton Metropole in Brighton, will be at the hub of a series of targeted events offering specific audiences a wide range of business, networking and social attractions from July 11th-13th.

It will reflect the editorial style of *Develop* magazine, seeking to be inclusive whilst providing hard information that helps delegates build their knowledge. In addition to the conference there will be an extensive, free to attend exhibition. Within the expo there will be free seminars in addition to the pay-to-attend conference.

PIER GROUP: Develop in Brighton will bring game creators together

There will also be part of the event dedicated to colleges that run game development courses.

"It makes sense that for three days of the year the development community has an event that enables the spotlight to shine on them," said *Develop* editor Owain Bennallack.

Develop will remain a supporter of existing games development events, particularly the premier global event GDC, which returns to San Jose next March.

"The Develop Conference will offer a different experience, making the most of an appealing UK location that offers everything from cheap accommodation to five star hotels within walking distance," added Bennallack.

For more info contact Andy@tandemevents.co.uk or call 020 7251 8550.

[OPINION]

Darryl Still
Nvidia

European development is currently undergoing a massive re-alignment and shifting of focus, from both the geographical and technical point of view. More than ever before, Europe needs a coherent and well managed developer event that reflects its growing influence in the marketplace; one that carries the same amount of weight that GDC has in the USA.

We are delighted to hear of the plans for the Develop Conference and will wholeheartedly support this event and the excellent team that is behind it. The early plans seem extremely encouraging, and the plans for consultation with key players give further room for optimism that this time the European development community is really going to get the event it deserves.

Circle rounds off interactive expansion

TOMB RAIDER creators Jeremy Heath-Smith and Adrian Smith's Circle Studio has expanded to launch an interactive DVD division, *MCV* can reveal.

The Derby-based outfit, formed in October 2003 by the erstwhile Core Design duo, is discussing the venture for the first time at this week's Games Market Europe event.

The division is headed by Martin Carr, who joined Circle 12 months ago from Zoo Digital, which achieved huge success with its IDVD version of *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?*

"Martin came in specifically to look at new ventures and new businesses, primarily because development is a tough business to be in at the moment," CEO Jeremy Heath-Smith told *MCV*.

> *"Development's a tough business. If it goes badly wrong, we need something else we can be involved in"*
> **Jeremy Heath Smith, Circle**

"We looked far enough down the path to say if development goes badly wrong we need something else that we can be involved in. We wanted to be in control of our destiny more rather than being reliant on publishers."

Heath-Smith confirmed that the firm has signed deals with a number of leading sports and entertainment brands, with confirmation due as soon as formalities are completed. Circle's first IDVD title is due for release this November.

Circle's first game, *Without Warning* on PS2 and Xbox, is scheduled for release on October 28th, publisher by Capcom.
Circle: 01332 545040

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EVENT GUIDE

September 16th-18th
Tokyo Game Show
tgs.cesa.or.jp

September 19th-20th
Video Game Investor Conference
Hotel Nikko, San Francisco

October 4th-5th
X05
Amsterdam
Microsoft: 0118 909 4599

October 7-9th
Indie Games Conference, Eugene Oregon
www.indiegamescon.com

October 24th-25th
The LA Office Roadshow
Europe, London
www.laoffice.com

October 25th-26th
Brand Licensing Show
London
www.brandlicensingexpo.com

October 27th-28th
Austin Game Conference
www.gameconference.com

October 31st - November 1st
Serious Games Summit
Washington DC
www.seriousgames.org

January 5th-8th
2006 International CES
Las Vegas
www.cesweb.org

January 25th-28th 2006
ToyFair
ExCeL, London
www.toyfair.com

May 10th-12th
E3 2006
Los Angles
www.e3expo.com

Ubi claims pole position in 360 starting line-up

Leading Xbox publisher looks to capitalise on Microsoft's next-gen offering, with King Kong swatting the opposition ● Suggests £44.99 as premium software price point

by Neil Long

TOUGH-TALKING Ubisoft has struck an early blow in the next-gen battle by claiming that it is best prepared for the arrival of Xbox 360.

With *King Kong* and *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter* already confirmed as launch titles for the upcoming new Microsoft console, marketing director Jon Rosenblatt told *MCV*: "We're as ready as any of the publishers, if anything we're probably more ready. We've got the biggest movie licence on next-gen and we've got, in my mind, the best shooter. We're very much ready to pounce on 360."

ROSENBLATT: "We're as ready as anyone, probably more ready"

Microsoft has yet to confirm software pricing for the new console, but with Ubisoft champing at the bit, Rosenblatt added: "£44.99 is where it should be. Ubisoft will be there and as competitive as everyone else – it's a great price for what consumers will get out of it."

The publisher last week outlined its multi-million pound marketing spend for this Christmas, along with plans to team up with a variety of partners including Pringles, Kellogg's, Burger King and *The Sun* to promote *King Kong* alone. *Ghost Recon Advanced Warfighter* is also set to infiltrate the Christmas charts, with promotions planned in conjunction with BT Broadband and Xbox Live, as well as extensive TV, online and print advertisements.

Ubisoft: 01932 838230

CAMPAIGN OF THE WEEK

BUBBLE DVD GAMES CONSOLE

Developer: Bright Things **Format:** DVD **Release Date:** August 2005

MARKETING: Bubble launches with a £750k marketing campaign. A 40-second TV advertisement, created by Origami Films, is kicking off in early September and carries on throughout autumn. The advertisement features several of the high profile characters who appear in the launch titles.

RETAIL: Distribution has already been secured in major outlets such as Argos, Toys R Us, Woolworths, Early Learning Centre, Mothercare, John Lewis and The Entertainer, ensuring that Bubble is very much observed as a mainstream product.

PRINT: Further print activity is planned for 2006, with a strategy to be determined at a later stage.

PRODUCT: A new wireless DVD games console for pre-schoolers, including titles supported by brands such as Teletubbies, Fimbles, Balamory, Tweenies, Thomas the Tank Engine and Noddy. Many more titles are also in the pipeline. The interface, design and content of the system has been designed to both appeal and cater to the very young demographic. The titles feature DVD quality visuals and aim to place the child within the world of the characters. Bubble comes with an interactive book, DVD game, game cartridge and storage cases.

Bandai: 01489 790944

Noddy and other familiar pre-school characters will help boost the appeal of the toddler-friendly console, Bubble

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- Collect the special coins and unlock music, animations and galleries featuring Hello Kitty and friends
- Unlock new weapons and outfits to battle through the game in style!
- Sanrio Town is brought to life in colourful detail, look out for your favourite Sanrio characters everywhere you go.

Point-of-Sale

Marketing Highlights

TV	4 WEEK TV CAMPAIGN ACROSS ITV AND CHILDREN'S SATELLITE CHANNELS
PRINT	3 MONTHS SPECIALIST AND LIFESTYLE PRESS CAMPAIGN
ONLINE	1 MONTHS TARGETED LIFESTYLE SITES CAMPAIGN AND MINI GAME VIRAL
PR	TARGETED CHILDREN'S AND TEENAGER LIFESTYLE MAGAZINES WITH EUROPEAN LAUNCH EVENTS FEATURING HELLO KITTY

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POINT OF SALE

Eidos: A2 posters, standees, cubes, sale sheets and DVD demos are available to promote *Total Overdose*.

Activision: Movie tie-in *Fantastic Four* is backed with a large array of POS including inlays for PS2 and Xbox, counter top standees, cubes, double sided posters and oversized boxes for PS2 and Xbox.

Capcom: Sales sheets are supporting *Resident Evil 4* and the upcoming *Nightmare Before Christmas*. PSP inlays are available for *Darkstalkers Chronicles: The Chaos Tower*. *Resident Evil Outbreak File* is backed with A2 posters, oversized boxes and PS2 inlays.

Take 2: *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* is supported with A2 posters. A2 posters and inlays for PS2 and Xbox are supporting upcoming title *The Warriors* whilst *Midnight Club 3: DUB Edition* is backed with A2 posters, PSP inlays and boxes.

Nokia: N-Gage racer *Glimmerati* is promoted with posters, oversized boxes and pod wings.

Sega: Inlays are available for *World Snooker Challenge 2005* on PSP whilst *Virtua Tennis World Tour* is supported with posters, inlays, window clings, dummy boxes and counter display units. Posters, standees, cubes and wobblers inlays are backing *Super Monkey Ball* whilst A2 posters are backing upcoming titles for *Spartan: Total Warrior*.

Empire: *Hello Kitty Roller Rescue* is backed with A2 posters, standees and cubes.

BVG: POS coming soon for *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, The Witch and The* Wardrobe.

Konami: A2 posters and cubes are backing PSP titles *Coded Arms* and *Metal Gear Acid*. Window stickers and A2 posters are promoting *Yu-Gi-Oh*.

CHANNEL GAMES

All of the merchandise listed is available from Channel Games. For further details, simply log on to its dedicated POS online store www.gamespos.com. For all your retail, merchandising and POS requirements, please call Danny Coe on 07813 672599, or email him on dcoe@channel-advantage.co.uk

PRICE CHECK MANCHESTER

STORE / GAME	*Destroy All Humans!* THQ PS2	*Brian Lara 2005* Codemasters Xbox	*GTA: San Andreas* Rockstar PC	*C. Chocolate Factory* Vivendi PC
GAME	£32.99	£34.99	N/A	N/A
GAMESTATION	£32.99	£29.99	£32.99	£29.99
HMV	£34.99	£29.99	£34.99	£24.99
Virgin Megastore	£37.99	£39.99	£29.99	£29.99
WHSmith	£34.99	N/A	N/A	N/A
WOOLWORTHS	£34.99	£32.99	£34.99	£24.99

There are larger variances in price here than we have seen recently, with *Brian Lara* varying by up to £10. No-one appears to be hitting £29.99 with *Destroy All Humans* and even the price of PC and GBA titles varies considerably.

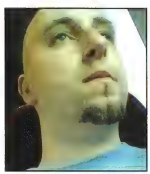
IN STORE PROMOTIONS

Dixons **PS2:** The one bundle Dixons is currently promoting includes the following: PS2 console, joypad, DVD remote control, Xploder Lite cheat system, *Brian Lara International Cricket*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Lego Star Wars*, all for £199.99.
Xbox: Basic deal costs £124.99 and includes a black Xbox, one joypad, the Xploder Lite cheats system and *Brian Lara International Cricket*.
DS: Perhaps due to the lack of software backing the DS at present, Dixon's main bundle offers more GBA than DS but is still good value. For £129.99 you'll get the *Metroid Prime Hunters* demo and spare stylus, a copy of dating simulation *Sprung* and then GBA versions of *Lego Star Wars* and *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Pandora Tomorrow*.

GAME **PS2:** The High Street giant still offers arguably the biggest range of hardware bundles on the Internet. Amongst the deals currently available is the chance to pick up a slimline silver PS2 console, one official silver joypad and another unofficial DreamWave silver pad for £124.99 with the choice of one of the following chart-topping games: *Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell: Chaos Theory*, *Medal of Honor: European Assault*, *Juiced*, *Destroy All Humans* or a *GoldenEye: Rogue Agent*/*Lord of the Rings: Third Age* double pack.
GameCube: There are plenty of goodgains out there for any consumers looking to buy into Nintendo's current machine at this late stage in its life. For £89.99 they'll get a platinum GameCube console along with an official platinum pad, a copy of *Donkey Konga* with an additional bongo controller and a copy of *Mario Kart: Double Dash*.

[TALKING SHOP]

Cork the whines, these are great days for indies



AS WE FIND ourselves once again standing at the edge of the next generation, of gaming hardware, it's time to ask: what does this mean for the apparently dying independent games retailer? Some may chant in unison: "We can no longer compete!" Absolute rubbish, I say. I am sorry to be so harsh, or in some people's eyes, perhaps overly naïve or idealistic, but I personally think things couldn't be looking better for specialist games retailers.

As the new consoles leap into the market with all the pomp and grandeur of a political manifesto, complete with the spin doctor's open lies covered with a sugar coating, we are facing a momentous time in the games industry on all sides. Let's take a look at one side, our side - the independent gaming specialist.

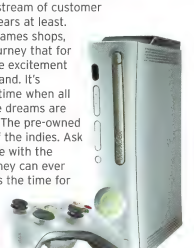
> *Maybe I'm being naive, but I think things couldn't be looking better for specialist games retailers.*

The average life expectancy of sales of new hardware introduced into the market is often five years. Now the pre-owned market would be the same plus two years: that's a potential seven years of business from one console launch.

We are facing not one new piece of hardware, but over the next three years we will see at least four high profile and well supported platforms. That guarantees a solid stream of customer activity for the next 10 years at least.

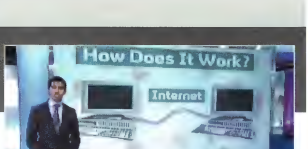
We are, as specialist games shops, about to embark on a journey that for me fills me with the same excitement as my first Atari Grandstand. It's amazing to be here at a time when all the hard work and all the dreams are about to become reality. The pre-owned market is the strength of the indies. Ask not how you can compete with the multiples, and ask how they can ever compete with you. This is the time for success; take it and run with it.

Graham Golden
X Electrical,
South London



BARBED WIRES

Ah, the Internet; home of wild speculation, amusing contradiction, irredeemable imbecility, occasional brilliance and excessive use of the word 'awesome'. One day, we'd like to live there...



UNSURPRISINGLY, the wires have been buzzing with reaction to the Xbox 360. launch details. Oddly, **Forbes.com** asks: Why is the new Xbox so expensive? It points to the fact that ten years ago a DVD player could set you back $1,000 and that now you can pick up one for $25. Hmm. So, ten years after the launch of the original PlayStation, how much do those machines selling for now? Surely the point is that Microsoft is launching a system at the same price as its predecessor. But that doesn't make good copy, does it, chaps?

Elsewhere, **Eurogamer** attempts to clarify GAME's Xbox 360 pre-order scheme, with the retailer understandably cautious on how many deposits it takes until allocations are confirmed by Microsoft... It's clearly not a concern for GameStop across the Atlantic, which is offering its customers the Ultimate Xbox 360 Bundle. According to **I4U.com** site, the pack includes the console, 11 games (forgetting the launch line-up is yet to be announced), wireless controller, Play and Charge kit, rechargeable battery, Xbox Live 12 month card and a one year product replacement plan – all for a bargain price of $1,199.83. And, as **I4U.com** points out, on top of that, GameStop's website will charge an extra $9.99 for shipping. What would Forbes make of that?

Over at games blog **Thetriforce.com**, details of *Channel 4 News*' highly technological explanation of how Google's new Internet phone service will actually work is highlighted (*see pic*): "Tomorrow, Channel 4 will explain how fridges work by showing a diagram of snow, scarves and the sun crossed out" the merry pranksters suggest.

More business news comes via the **Gamesradar.com** forum where 'Huw2103' asks: "Does any1 else think Nintendo will be out of buisness (sic) soon. I have talked 2 several friends and they al want xbox 360's and 2 be honest so do i." Time to sell those shares, then.

As ever, **UK Resistance** cuts to the chase of the serious issues at the heart of the industry, last week examining the role of women in video games: Getting shot; Getting stabbed; Getting blown up; getting kicked to death... etc. "...Just the same as the role of men in video games," they point out. "Do you see how that works, girls, or are you too busy playing Da Urbz on your pastel pink DS?"

Finally, *MCV* would like to offer its best wishes to **Clubskill.com**'s senior news editor – that's *senior* news editor – Chris Holmes. He turned 16 last week.

[COVER TO COVER] P2

Not got time to read the latest specialist mag? No worries, we've done it for you...

Publisher: Highbury
Cover Price: £3.99
Highest Review Score: *Archer Maclean's Mercury* PSP/*Virtua Tennis World* PSP 10/10
Lowest Review Score: Spider-Man PSP 5/10

The Highbury mag boasts a new look after relaunching last month, and has also added the claim that it's 'The UK's handiest PlayStation mag', whatever that means.

The cover disc features cheats for *Fantastic Four*, *Batman Begins*, *Spider-Man* and *The Hulk*.

The big news this month is the upcoming release of *DirT* from developer Nu Generation (set for release via Deep Silver). The eponymous thong-showing lead character "could very well eclipse Lara Croft as the consummate kick-ass chick" says the mag. Other news this month: two giants of the video game world, Sub Zero and Clank go head-to-head as P2 finds out who's best with the ladies; and 'slightly unbalanced' editor Roy Kimber is young, free and single. Incredible, huh?

> *"I don't really play games anymore. I think they're kind of childish and I kinda grew out of them"*

The lead feature this month sees the team go 'Out On The Town', well, Bournemouth beach to ask consumers for their views on the 'hottest gaming issues'. "I don't really play games any more. I think they're a bit childish and I kinda grew out of them," says Sam, 14, from Bournemouth. Ibari, 22, from Bilbao tells the team that he went into the arcades, but didn't play any games "cos you have to pay and there's more girls out there". Brett, 26, from Cape Town admits to drinking beer when playing multiplayer games, the scamp. And Claire, 23, from Reading doesn't play games at all. But her husband does. Blimey, surely that's enough of those burning issues for one month!

The 'Celebrity' interview this month is with the promotional girls for Sony's FT '05 – and FHM regulars Lucy Pinder and Michelle Marsh. The 'Weird Work Experience Kid' (who, hilariously, pops up throughout the mag) says: "Wow, I've never seen a real woman before. What are those huge things on their chests?". We say, Stop it. No, really.

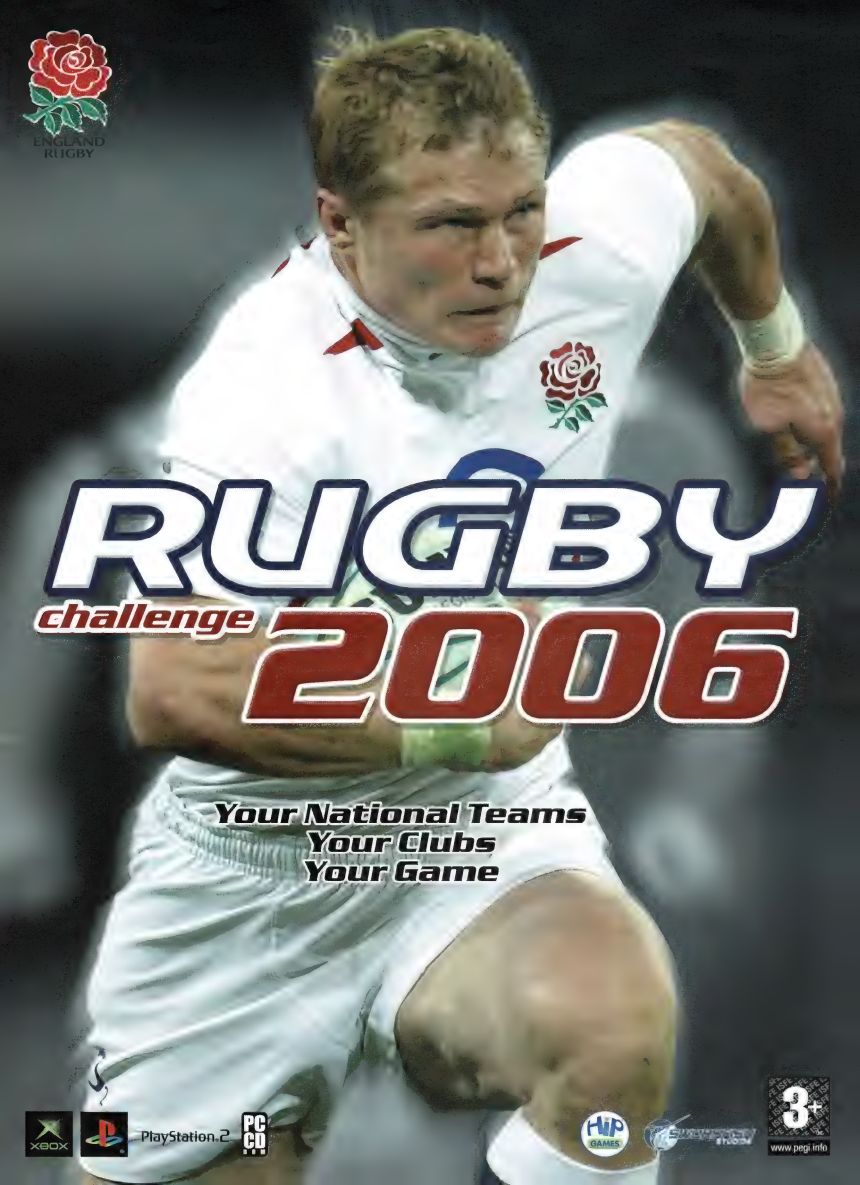
And just a few pages on, there's an investigation into sexism in games and the games industry. Again, no, really.

Finally, the team offers a rather misguided comment within the review of Eidos' *Smart Bomb* for PSP: "... a lot more fun on public transport than an actual bomb."

MEDIA PLAYERS

Michael French
Edge Online

How did you get into games journalism? I was a fanzine editor until joining the crack squad of trade news assassins at *MCV*.
Favourite part of your job? Having the chance to take the respected *Edge* brand into the online territory.
What do you do when you first get into the office? Get a coffee, check my email, and have a nose over the news sites.
What do you like doing when you're not working? I'm a big TV junkie. But I don't watch any old trash. I like the slick US stuff. *Lost*, *CSI*, *24* - that kind of thing. Oh, and, er, The *O.C.*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Commentary by Dewi Morris, former England player and commentator for Sky Sports, and John Inverdale, rugby commentator for the BBC

Rugby Challenge 2006 promises to deliver the action with slick presentation, together with unsurpassed hard hitting encounters that avid Rugby fans richly deserve and expect. Developed by Swordfish Studios, which was recently named Developer of the Year at the second annual TIGA awards, Rugby Challenge 2006 will feature:

THE RUGBY GAME OF THE COMING SEASON

- Updated content for the 2006 season (player names, teams, leagues, rules): over 450 teams and 2000 players
- Prestigious official licenses: national teams, the "Six Nations tournament", the official leagues (The English Premiership, Celtic League, France's Top 14).
- Includes a player editor: change the names of the players, teams and tournaments! Create your own leagues and cups!

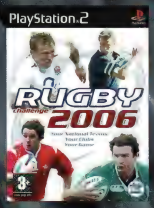
FLUID RUGBY

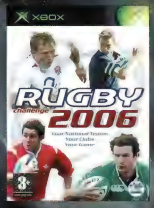
- A game accessible to everyone (Experts/Novices)
- Fluid gameplay just like real life rugby!
- A comprehensive training mode to learn and understand the rules of Rugby. With three levels of training (easy, medium, expert), perfect your skills and become the king of the stadium!

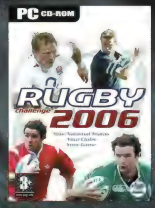
THE GAME FOR ALL RUGBY FANS

- A realistic and detailed career mode including player transfers, coach hiring, weekly training sessions, financial management, injury management...
- Includes the following "challenge" modes: Survival, Classic games, Superstar ... Play the most mythical matches of the 20th century with the appropriate rules!

UP TO 4 PLAYERS







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- Trade Press
Sales Contact : uksales@hip-europe.com
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ISPSPTHENEWWALKMAN?

It's probably the sexiest, most anticipated games console in history. But as PSP this week finally launches across Europe, Sony has even greater expectations than you might imagine. So can it, in the now infamous phrase of Ken Kuturagi, become the Walkman of the 21st century...?

BY JOHNNY MINKLEY

WHEN PHIL HARRISON speaks of PSP as a "whole new story" in the PlayStation saga, not just a new chapter, it's easy to see why. No brand has done more to drive mainstream acceptance of video gaming than PlayStation. PSP, with its dick-hardening looks and multimedia potential, could take this much further.

As a games machine, since launching in Japan last December it has taken its time to build a library of high quality titles. But don't forget it was a good year before PS2 had its first triple-A system seller in *Gran Turismo 3*. As it stands, the handheld has bedded in a little, with some genuinely excellent titles among the Euro launch offering.

Much has been made of the delay in Europe. This has been exacerbated by SCEE's failure to keep to its original pledge of Q1, plus the subsequent clumsy war on grey importing, fuelled by a snowballing desperation at retail for its arrival to turn the tide of a brutal transition.

But now it's here, and set to fly off shelves, these issues will soon be forgotten.

In many ways, the PAL launch is by far the most robust so far, offering the most-up-to-date unit yet – and the imminent arrival of *GTA: Liberty City Stories* should provide it with the system seller it deserves.

But the impact PSP is already having outside of the gaming sphere is equally striking and in the long run, potentially far more significant.

"We think PSP is the biggest thing since the iPod," insists gadget mag *Stuff* editor-in-chief Tom Dunmore. "We'd rate it alongside that rather than Game Boy. PSP is one of those devices that is so sexy that I think people of all ages and both sexes will be really inspired to buy it.

"I'm sure it won't take long for this to become as essential a gadget as the iPod," agrees *The Sun*'s Jonathan Weinberg.

"I think it'll do superbly well for Sony, without really undermining Nintendo's market in any serious way," agrees *Eurogamer* editor Kristan Reed. "If anything, PSP simply opens up a whole new market, and will grow the overall business rather than eat into the existing spend."

The distinction is critical, according to Wedbush Morgan analyst Michael Pachter:

"PSP is a portable device, while the DS and GBA are handhelds. Portable implies that the device is almost as powerful as a dedicated console. Games for handhelds are supposed to be more 'simple' and appeal to a younger demographic."

But if Sony genuinely believes it has a product with the potential to become the Walkman of today, it must be accepted as the definitive portable entertainment system. And that hinges, to some extent, on the success of its proprietary UMD format.

Sony's intentions for PSP in the broader entertainment space are made clear by the bundling of a copy of *Spider-Man 2* the movie with the system, rather than a game.

"Watch cinema-quality, full-length films on the go!" strange men in suits are screaming at you.

But what Sony is also doing with the *Spider-Man 2* movie offer is to set its proprietary disc format up as a genuine alternative to the DVD and CD.

The impact PSP is having outside of the gaming sphere is striking and, in the long run, potentially significant.

It's a risky strategy for the company whose Mini Disc format failed so badly.

In Sony's favour, on the movie front it already has the backing of the majority of Hollywood's biggest major studios, including Paramount and MGM, as well as its own film division. And by June of this year, two titles had already notched up over 100,000 sales each in the US.

UK retail is already pushing movies and music video compilations, hoping to cream off additional margin. But are we really one day going to wander into HMV and find giant racks of UMDs competing with DVDs and music? This of course remains to be seen.

How frequently do people find themselves travelling with two and a half hours spare to watch a film on the move? And with UMDs retailing for the same price as DVDs, is it likely consumers will buy both? If not, and they mostly watch movies at home, do they buy a DVD and watch it on the 40-inch Plasma, or on PSP's pocket-sized screen?

"I'm deeply sceptical of UMD," reveals *NME* editor Conor McNicolas. "Sony has a deep love of proprietary formats – the Memory Stick kind of took off, but not really; Mini Disc died a death and now we've got another one."

A number of companies are already offering music collections on UMD, but all of these carry video content. Given the universal success of the mp3 digital format it's highly unlikely anyone would risk straight music releases.

"From a user's point of view, music is digital, and they want to be able to move it from their phone to their PSP, to their home PC and stereo," McNicolas continues. "People are very savvy; they're moving very quickly and proprietary formats are not really going to deliver."

Stuff's Dunmore agrees that it is the functionality of PSP, and its ability to play digital files, rather than the disc format itself, that will appeal to many: "There are the people who will rip media onto memory sticks and watch it, rather than necessarily buying movies on UMD, for example, so they will use it as a movie player, but not perhaps in the way Sony wants them to."

PSP's success as a games system has never been in any serious doubt. Its pretensions to mass-market greatness depend on its wider functionality. With wi-fi connectivity, web browsing, and straightforward transfer of data from PC to PSP via USB housed in its stunning body, it has the feature set and looks to become a complete portable digital media and entertainment solution for the masses. And once PS3 arrives, PSP's ability to link up wirelessly will boost this further. Whether that's enough for today's increasingly fickle consumer is what will ultimately define Sony's handheld.

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OPINION & ANALYSIS

[INDUSTRY EVENTS] **Greg Ingham**

Everyone loves a get-together

NOW here's a thing. For all that this industry is all modern and different and techno-adroit and connected, so it has a disproportionate need for old-fashioned face-to-face contact.

There are now, ooh, easily more than 100 events that you can dally at and convince yourself that you're getting benefit from. Actually, I made that up: I gave up counting after 10. (And even that's not true.) Anyone for Serious Games? It's yours, in Washington in October. How about Women in Games? Washington's the place, September's the time. You could even succumb to the charms of the Games and Health Conference, held in September in Baltimore. And doubtless there's even a place for The Games and Eating Disorders Symposium (yup, that's made up too. But someone'll do it.)

Why this collective need to meet and talk? And what of the most recent – the Edinburgh Interactive Entertainment Festival?

Partly, it's to do with age and change. This is still a young industry, groping beyond its adolescence and figuring out how it wants to exist as an increasingly mainstream medium. Other industries have already done that, in a less self-conscious age. Likewise we have to do that whole paradigm shift thing on a disturbingly regular basis, as new platforms arrive and challenge, and as other devices and larger companies converge and threaten. That takes thinking. And with new business modes, so there's the need for basic commerce.

Chuck in a restless insecurity not to miss out on the next, next big thing, a barely-masked desire for career fluidity, a smidge of optimistic blank-sheet entrepreneurialism where seemingly anything can be created – and hence the cluttered calendars.

> *This is still a young industry groping beyond its adolescence and figuring out how it wants to exist as a medium.*

But of all the events, one sits truly separate: Edinburgh. I'm convinced that this will become a focal point for the tribes of the games industry. In years to come, we'll be pleased that the dear thing survived its inevitably fragile formative years – and that we'll have a compelling platform for mainstream cultural acceptance. Even the longest journey begins with a single step, and all that.

For without that cultural acceptance, we'll be in danger of operating in some marginalised hinterland that doesn't attract sufficient talent and capital, where games are too often only (seen as) the branded goods of other industries.

As we begin at least to contemplate moving out of the Industrial Age of the games industry, from the techspecfest obsession and limiting format wars to the nirvana of a platform-neutral future, so the quality of fresh ideas and thinking will become more significant.

And that's a key part of Edinburgh's function. It acts as a crucible to test new thinking, as a stage to hear those fresh perspectives from within and without, and as a showcase for games as a legitimated cultural force.

Now, this may sound a tad abstruse – a world away from the day-to-day toughness and excitement of doing business in the games industry. Yet for the industry's long-term health and acceptance, it is vital that it becomes fully supported and not just filed away as another event to be justified in a short term ROI context.

That, and it's a good lig, of course...

Greg Ingham is chief executive officer of Future

[WOMEN IN GAMES] **Lisa Foster**

Just stop the nagging

AM I the only woman in the games industry who doesn't feel the need for us ladies to be 'recognised' for working within the market? I'm speaking, of course, about the bodies and events being organised specifically for the fairer sex.

Sorry, but the whole Women in Games thing makes me really angry. And not just during a certain time of the month.

Isn't highlighting the fact that women work in the games industry rather patronising? Are we patting Lisa Morgan on the back for being clever enough to be CEO of GAME, bless her? Are we saying that Jane Cavanagh has done "really well for herself" for now heading up the UK's biggest games publisher?

How about Sarah Ewing, European boss of LucasArts? Future's publishing director Mia Walters? The producer of SingStar, Paulina Bozek? Should we respect them for achieving those positions in the market? Or should we applaud them for achieving those positions – as women – in the market? Isn't that rather condescending and, actually, sexist in itself?

If we want gender equality in this industry, then it's about time women stopped banging on about it. Because, as the examples outlined above show, there is no inequality. There are no barriers to entry; there's no glass ceiling.

Yes, the industry may be a male-dominated one, but it's not because women are passed over in favour of their hairier rivals. Like many other industries, that's just how it is; maybe it's simply down to the fact that blokes are attracted to working in the games business, because they're gamers.

> *If we want gender equality then it's about time women stopped banging on about it. Because there is no inequality; no glass ceiling.*

And before anyone starts on the point about why more boys than girls play games, it's just because they do. Boys like video games. They like Action Man, too, and Hot Wheels. Do we need to worry about why girls prefer not to follow those pursuits, too? The likes of *The Sims*, *Tetris* and *Dancing Stage* prove that there are certain games – which emulate girls' play patterns in general – that appeal to girls. (I'm waiting for Nintendshoes on DS, personally). I'm not convinced we need to continue to scratch our chins about why they're not all playing *Counterstrike*?

I'm sure the claws will be out for me from the Bitchesofwar and Menmustdie clans, but seriously: enough is enough. Let's stop wasting time trying to force this issue into the public domain, and spend it debating the issues that matter. Like when Brad will marry Angelina. Or what I should wear to the Golden Joystick Awards.

Incidentally, if you Google 'Women in Games' the sponsored link is to a site which promises "women that just want sex". Now THAT must annoy the WIGs...

Lisa Foster is managing editor of MCV

OPINION & ANALYSIS

[THE HANDHELD REVOLUTION] Phil Harrison

The wow factor

SO WHY is PSP going to make a difference to our lives? Why is it a whole new era for our industry? I believe PSP has a number of powerful factors that will contribute to its success.

A widescreen, high resolution screen that literally lights up the room means it feels like you are holding a big screen TV in your hands.

The UMD disc format – 1.8GB of content on a tiny disc – means a tremendous depth of content from the developers and a great business model for publishers of all media types.

The ability to play movies, not just as a gimmick, but as a central aspect of the PSP function and with the broad support of the major studios behind it means that PSP is more than just a games player. Combine that with the support for Memory Stick and now PSP becomes a truly converged personal media player – your content, when you want it, where you want it.

Then you add the fact that PSP is a network device from day one. Unlike PS2 where network functions were added later, PSP has been designed from the ground up to communicate with the rest of the world: with other PSPs over wi-fi for instant multiplayer gaming or to Game Share playable games for other people to try or to browse the web with the built-in browser and to connect to other devices via wi-fi or a USB cable.

PSP is a dynamic device – not only can you personalise your entertainment experience with games, music, movies, pictures or web browsing, we can upgrade and enhance the operating system functionality via seamless upgrades – wirelessly over the network or from disc. We've already added a number of key additional updates since the launch in Japan, all of which are standard in the European launch configuration, and we've got more planned. PSP will grow – there will be new interface features, new data formats supported, new devices connected and new entertainment experiences to be enjoyed. And that's before we even talk about the interoperability with PS3...

> *"PSP is a truly converged media player – your content, when you want it, where you want it."*

The biggest reason for the PSP's bright future is the wide application and entertainment possibilities the machine will bring to the broadest audience. Whether they are attracted by the best handheld game experiences, the ability to watch blockbuster movies, listen to their own music, share pictures with friends or to browse the web, PSP offers multiple reasons to own the machine and adopt the technology into your life. It's also a stunning statement of design cool – if you own one, you will become an unwitting ambassador and evangelist for the format. It cannot be helped.

Phil Harrison is SCEE's vice president of studios

[COMMENT] Nicholas Lovell

Reasons to be cheerful

IT IS TIME to be positive about British publishing. The British tradition of hand-wringing about the loss of native industries overseas is well-established, and doomsayers are quick to point to the imminent demise of Britsoft at every opportunity.

A DTI report written in association with ELSPA and TIGA in 2002, pointed out that strong domestic publishers were vital to the well-being of the British games industry. It warned against the dangers of assuming that international publishers, particularly Americans, will automatically base their European headquarters here, given language and time zone advantages. This warning seems particularly prophetic given the rumours published in *MCV* earlier this month that EA is considering moving its European publishing headquarters to Geneva.

In late 2004, two years after the report was published, the situation seemed pretty bleak for British publishing. Eidos was in imminent danger of going bust after a strategic review that stretched out without a buyer in sight. Finally, a suitor emerged in the form of John Riccitiello's Elevation Partners, and it looked as if the darling of Britsoft and creator of Lara Croft would shortly be managed from California.

Codemasters had seen a flurry of management departures and the cancellation of *Club Football* and *Dragon Empires*, its long-awaited MMOG. SCi was doing well, but had only one truly global franchise in *Conflict*, and did not sell directly into the US. Doom, doom, doom.

How the world can change in nine months. In an audacious move, SCi secured the backing of Eidos' shareholders and mounted a last-minute bid for the company to create a British powerhouse with global franchises and distribution. Codemasters secured a significant investment from Benchmark, the venture capitalists who backed eBay and Palm, and added experienced management talent to the top team.

New publishers have emerged like Digital Jesters, who recently secured external investment. One new publisher, Giant, created the global hit *LEGO Star Wars* and merged with developer Traveller's Tales to create a new business with a successful track record and huge future potential.

It's not all positive. The market remains tough for developers trying to transition to the next gen, and for indie retailers trying to compete in an era of aggressive discounting.

But compared with the gloom that seemed prevalent across the industry earlier in the year, there are good reasons to believe that Britain can retain its place as a significant player in the global games industry.

Nicholas Lovell is managing director of Lodestar Partners

[FEEDBACK]

Do you think the Q4 period this year will be as big as the same period last year, in terms of sales?

"This Q4 will be very different to last year with the new formats. The problem for buyers is trying to second guess which will be most in demand. We know the sales are there this Christmas but what is more interesting is where they will go."
Patrick Kelly, Games Buyer, Virgin

"I see no reason why it shouldn't be better than last year. PSP will be in its stride by then, and the early adopters and hardcore gamers will snap up Xbox 360. GB Micro and DS will also appeal to a different market, so there's plenty of scope this Q4 to expand the existing market."
Max Everingham, Head of UK Communications, Codemasters

"It's definitely going to be interesting because if PS2 drops in price as expected, it will widen the market further, and with key early adopter products like PSP and Xbox 360, there's plenty to keep gamers happy while the older formats continue to do well – although hardware shortages are a slight concern considering what happened last year."
Jon Cronin, Marketing Manager, CEX

It's our biggest Christmas yet, we've got Crazy Frog coming out at a key time and hopefully we'll be up there with the big boys. With the new formats we just sit back and let the others fight it out – we can't compete with the likes of Microsoft, and the PS2 market is as strong as ever, so for now we're concentrating on current gen."
Leo Zullo, Marketing Director, Digital Jesters

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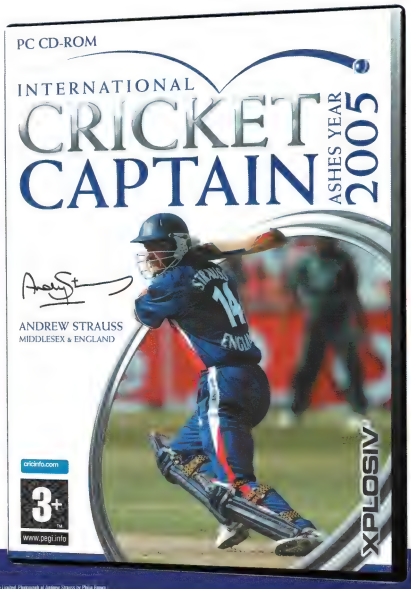

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Sony, GAME, Electronic Arts, Future. All dominate their respective sectors. All provoke strong views from competitors. But is this really an axis of evil? Is it inevitable that they will continue to lead and control their markets? As the games industry strides out of a transition period are there new opportunities for rivals to claim back some of the hallowed ground guarded by the giants? **Matt Martin** investigates...

EVERYBODY LOVES to hate The Untouchables. They destroy the industry with their ownership of their respective sectors.

Electronic Arts is responsible for dumbing games down to the lowest common denominator – yearly updates of the same game and cheap movie licences with all the Hollywood flash swamping generic gameplay.

GAME slashes the prices of every new release before its competitors, and reaps the rewards of stacking high and selling cheap, while indies bleed cash into the gutter because of the multiples' cut-throat practises.

Future prints nothing but sponsored games catalogues where exclusives aren't worth the £5.50 paper they're written on, cash increases scores and editorial is nothing but a rehash of a games manual.

And Sony is the all-conquering overlord because PlayStation equals video games. There is no alternative. Publishers and developers must sign on with the behemoth or be crushed under its weight.

On the face of it. But this is only true if you believe all the comment threads on the bottom of sub-standard websites. In truth, The Untouchables have become market leaders because of excellent business practices – something their rivals and competitors, detractors and admirers will freely admit. Of course, when you're the champ everyone wants to take a swing at you.

> *Publishers copy EA, which has to be flattering, but it would be a mistake to assume their sports model would work in other markets.*
>
> ***Colin Bell, Juice Games***

And when you're failing it's so much easier to blame a highly competitive market rather than you own faults. You didn't have to make a *Tomb Raider/Splinter Cell* clone. Maybe you should think about making your shop a little more attractive to parents, you know, clean it up a bit. How many different gadgets is your new handheld trying to be? Etc.

Is the industry consolidating into strengthened defences, where the market leaders barricade themselves in their castles made of gold and let the peasants outside beg, fight and jostle for scraps? Are these four giants of the games industry unstoppable, evil, indestructible?

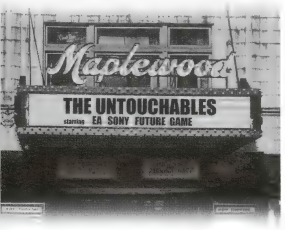
No and no. They currently rule their sectors but as anyone who has played a boss battle knows, bosses have weaknesses that need to be exploited.

Art for Arts sake

The wise gambler may already be laying a few notes on the Christmas number one. It's going to be an EA title. It might even be worth having a flutter on EA having at least five of the top ten Christmas sellers.

"EA has dominated the Christmas charts for a number of years, and this year will be no exception," says Craig

THE**UNTOUCHABLES**



McNicol, MD of Koch Media. "However I don't agree that it will be a total whitewash, with other mainstream brands also having strong chart potential."

"There are some heavyweight publishers that are doing a good job to muscle in on EA," agrees Simon Phillips of Gusto Games. "Anyway, EA is a household name along with its brands. This has got to be a good thing for introducing casuals to the gaming scene."

"EA's biggest strength," offers Phillips, "is the ability to be able to draw on a huge resource of talent in a moment's notice – it's absolutely priceless. And party to that, is money. It can't buy you love, but it can get big licences, huge dev teams and big marketing spend."

However, any company thinking it can just copy EA's methods could find itself with problems. "Other publishers are following its lead which has to be flattering for EA," says Colin Bell, MD of Juice Games. "But it would be a mistake to assume its sports model would work in other genres."

The big criticism levelled at EA is that the company churns out yearly updates that only differ marginally from the previous year's game. These become generic titles which gradually diminish in quality. Of course when it comes to sporting titles this is an acceptable routine, as to remain based in reality they need to reflect seasonal changes. "But annual releases outside these genres really face tough conditions, relying on creative minds to keep the franchise alive," says McNicol "If yearly titles can continue to push quality and raise standards then developers should be applauded in their success. However, short timescales and financial goals often dictate otherwise."

This repetition isn't just off-putting to consumers, but the staff who work so hard on the games themselves. "Due to having so many people working on very specific areas of a product, it stifles creativity – something that the games industry loves and needs," reckons Phillips. It's a problem that is also highlighted by Juice's Bell who says: "EA's greatest weakness is that it is difficult in such an organisation for staff to remain focused, feel valued and feel that they can directly contribute to success."

This familiarity breeds contempt amongst the specialist games press. Just pick up a magazine and read through an EA review and you can bet the first paragraph will be dedicated to slating the yearly policies. Not that this bothers EA. It doesn't need the specialist press anymore. "EA's market isn't really the serious gamers who buy specialist games magazines and read reviews, so getting good review scores in games magazines isn't important," offers a reviews editor for a leading UK games magazine. "It's more exposure and advertising, primarily in the lifestyle press, that interests EA."

Of course, the specialist press is considered corrupt anyway, offering scores for cash, so EA must be one of the biggest perpetrators, right? "We've had far more outrageous demands made by smaller publishers," says our source. "EA seems quite content to jet people to LA and San Francisco to see games then not even follow up how much coverage those games have received as a result of the time and money spent on it."

Play Satan?

Sony would love to lead home gaming for the third generation running. But some would suggest that this concentration on creating a machine dedicated purely to games is an outdated idea. Microsoft may be making initial steps by riding the wave of the 'High Definition era' but for a competitor to usurp Sony it may take more radical thinking.

"Break out of the 'console dedicated' trend and start producing home entertainment devices that are fully integrated DVR machines," reckons Lorne Lanning, boss of respected software house Oddworld Inhabitants. "This will increase the number of people who are interested in playing games. Currently, the focus on the core gaming audience is holding back new growth, creativity, and the overall potential of the medium."

It's not just the home console that Lanning sees as an outdated idea either. While Sony prepares the PSP for a European launch, its game-centric basis falls flat. "I don't care about the Game Boy or the PSP. I use a Treo and will only play games that become available for my multi-media handheld device that is already integrated into my life. I feel more and more people will go this way, and feel the future winners in handheld gaming devices will be those that best integrate the basic essentials that we've come to expect from these devices. Other specific application handhelds seem like something of the past."

"Two other potential problems crop up when discussing the next generation of Sony consoles. Remember all those press releases issued by a buoyant Microsoft on the success of Xbox Live? Not one equivalent has been issued by Sony. We all know what Xbox Live is but Sony doesn't have an equivalent brand.

"The standard that was set by Xbox Live is what all other console manufacturers should aim to emulate," says a prominent games publisher.

And could we be seeing a repeat of the problem dogged the early developments of hit titles for the

THE UNTOUCHABLES

PlayStation 2? As one anonymous developer puts it: "Microsoft's console is much easier to work with. The difficult development environment of the PS3 will continue to fuel a drag to market, and with the earlier release of the 360, this might be a real problem for Sony."

The Future's bleak

"It's fashionable for rivals to take a pop at Future, but you have to admire what it has achieved," says Damian Butt, veteran of Highbury/Paragon and now MD of Imagine Publishing. "Many of Future's titles are market leaders, and often with good reason. They are consistent, high quality, and they have an incredible infrastructure behind them."

It's generally felt that standards of games magazines have slipped.

> *"Can't we be more original? Can't we have magazines we can flick through on the shelves? Arena, Empire and Q don't rely on bagged issues every month."*
>
> **Damian Butt, Imagine Publishing**

Take a look on the shelves and the majority of games magazines are sealed tight in bags bulging with free DVDs and tips books. "Can't we think of something more original? Can we get back to magazines you can flick through on the shelves?" asks Butt. "*Arena, Empire* and *Q* don't rely on bagged issues every month."

This perception that the majority of games magazines are the same can never build loyalty amongst consumers. "Lack of individuality, with everyone cover-mounting the same thing, causes a drop in purchasing loyalty," observes Tarik Alozdi of Uncooked Media, publisher of *Invader* and the soon-to-be-launched *360 Gamer*.

Many would say that games magazines in general are slowly becoming obsolete. Circulation figures are falling and the Internet is becoming the first stop for all video games information. "Games mags are not selling like they used to because of two things – the similarity of titles in general, and the fact that they all appear aimed at crotch-clutching teenagers," says editor-in-chief of Imagine's *360* magazine Simon Phillips. "If publishers acknowledge that it's not just the kids' market that needs to be catered for, there is scope to revive flagging sales."

Imagine believes that the next wave of games consoles, along with the rise of the fabled 'mature gamer' are ideal times to launch a new style of gaming publications. "It's likely that the next generation of hardware will warrant a more sophisticated approach to magazines that reflects the aspirations of both the readers and the consoles," he says. "If publishers acknowledge that it's not just the kids market that needs to be catered for then there is scope to revive flagging sales."

The GAME's rigged

"GAME is an incredibly slick outfit and anyone who doesn't take an in-depth view of its model and come away with ideas for their own is a fool," says leading indie game shop owner Steve O'Brien. That kind of puts paid to the assumption that all indies hate the High Street giant. Here they are, feeding off the enemy's success.

And publishers have to shell out stacks of money to even get their games in a prominent position in store, right? "We don't expect them to range all of our lines; we're very selective about the titles proposed to them so we tend to get greater support this way," reveals Carl Franks, sales manager for Oxygen Interactive. There goes the argument that smaller publishers don't stand a chance in specialist stores…

GAME is in every major town and city and to a certain extent, it's a victim of its own success here in the UK. This is why the company intends to expand across Europe, with its sights set on 1,000 stores across the whole of the Continent. "I would have thought that the UK has reached saturation point for GAME and it makes sound commercial sense to grow its business in mainland Europe," says O'Brien. "It should stabilise the UK market too as it will then have a happy balance between turnover and profit."

When the price wars starts, or indeed continues to rage to different levels, it's GAME that usually takes the first wave of mud-slinging from indies and other specialists. "It does have a propensity to panic-price but then ironically, its size means it reacts slowly to market trends," says O'Brien.

But it's wrong for the blame of devaluing stock to be targeted at GAME full-stop. "I'd argue that supermarkets and e-tailers have also been leading a downward trend," argues Kevin Hassell, publishing director at Oxygen Interactive. "GAME absolutely dominates its sector of the market, and it's a huge sector, but there are other areas that are or will become very significant as the games market develops – online, digital download, non-traditional, and supermarkets are just some."

"In the UK, we're getting to saturation point," says a spokesperson for a leading technology retailer. "Anyone wanting to expand must make sure that they are doing what they do better than the competition. As games machines evolve into technology that does so much more than play games, GAME could actually help retain an audience that the gaming industry needs. New formats are incorporating other technologies, which means games machines aren't just for games. If anything, GAME will help retain a core gamer element to the market. It's not the same people who shop for games in supermarkets."

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Satellite Speakers - 30mm Full Range Neodymium Speakers 4ohm ● 6 Watt RMS.

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The Sound Grip offers a portable compact sized speaker system for use during gameplay with your PSP.

It produces high quality sound and also includes hand grips to improve gameplay, pass through ports for Earphones and Power and stand to allow music and movie playback. Also a case is included to hold both the Sound Grip, PSP and accessories

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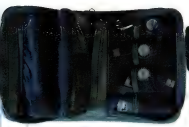

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BRING BACK REAL WEEKLY DATA

The UK weekly games charts need a boost. Since they were stripped of useful sales data over five years ago, they've only been good for the annual bet on the Christmas number one. But it looks like the weekly sales figures will finally be returning to the official charts. **Matt Martin** reports...

AFTER A MOVIE'S opening weekend, Hollywood moguls can consult figures to see how successful the latest blockbuster is. These figures usually make or break a film. If it flops on day one, it flops for good. TV stations are able to consult overnight viewing figures to gain an accurate reading of viewers the following day of broadcast. *Dr. Who* can be commissioned for another season early on in the series, while *Celebrity Wrestling* suffers the indignity of a move to quieter periods.

Throughout the various entertainment sectors it's possible to consult accurate sales data quickly and efficiently. Apart from us. This being the games industry, we do things differently. Or not do them at all. Don't ask for weekly software sales figures, because you can't have them.

As many are willing to say, strictly off the record you understand, unit sales were dropped from the weekly charts over five years ago because the biggest specialist games chain refused to contribute sales figures. It argued, possibly understandably, that it would be too easy for observers to calculate its market share. And because that market share was so big, the charts would have been rendered redundant without the retailer's input.

But five years have passed and the games retail landscape has changed significantly. So surely it's time to bring back those weekly figures? We decided to ask the industry its thoughts.

> *We'd like to publish weekly sales figures again, subject to all retailers feeling comfortable about it.*
>
> **Dorian Bloch, ChartTrack**

Well, that was the plan. But publishers, even those that had been vocal about sales figures, were unwilling to comment. Retail too wasn't keen to offer any on-the-record opinion about the state of the charts other than the enlightening: "Some of us would have no problems revealing this information, and we understand the value of it. But it's currently something for publishers to discuss amongst themselves". Which is odd, because some of the publishers we spoke to said that "it's in the hands of retail."

The publishing community has its own methods of collating numbers. Which might then suggest the ELSPA/ChartTrack charts are redundant. But they're clearly not, otherwise publishers wouldn't squeeze out those self-congratulatory press releases when a game they've shovelled their marketing budget on finally reaches number one in the quietest month of the year. Well, we assume it's the quietest month of the year, but we haven't got sales figures to back that up.

The official ChartTrack website boasts that the data collected comes from 7,000 retailers, covering 90 per cent of the software market. However, it's not very encouraging that when we're talking about the accuracy of data, ChartTrack's companion ELSPA, has entirely different figures on its website acknowledging 5,500

retailers, comprising 80 to 85 per cent of the market. A contentious point? These two companies work together, and when accuracy is crucial, they're aiming at different targets.

And yet ChartTrack only collates the figures, while ELSPA helps distribute them. We shouldn't shoot the messenger. The problem lies with retailers. "We would obviously be delighted to publish weekly sales figures again, subject to all retailers on our panel being comfortable with this proposition," offers Dorian Bloch, director of ChartTrack. For the record, that panel includes HMV, Play.com, WH Smiths, Chips, Amazon, Blockbuster, Asda and, of course, GAME.

This code of silence doesn't mean we can't still ask the questions. Isn't it advantageous for publishers and retailers to know exactly how well a game is selling? Isn't credible, regular and reliable sales data a sign of a mature industry? Ever wondered why Venture Capitalists, the City and investors target the UK music and movie industry for financial input over the games industry?

Five years down the line and the idea of weekly sales figures seemed dead. Until confirmation from ELSPA director general Roger Bennett threw a completely unexpected light on the subject. "We're actually looking to reintroduce them again and things are looking very encouraging," he reveals.

"The issue at the minute is something that ChartTrack and BARD (The British Association of Record Dealers) are currently looking at together. Certainly it's something that we as an industry are desperate to see again. Access to weekly sales data is something we've wanted to see return for a long, long time. It's something we obviously, desperately need as an industry, regardless of how individual companies, retailers or publishers feel about it." A call to BARD only meets with a redirection to a 'no comment' from ChartTrack.

It may come as a surprise to many that sales data is set to return to the charts, although it's clear details haven't yet been finalised. How key retailers will take this news should be interesting.

Will that retailer do what it threatened to do years ago and pull out of the charts all together? The important thing is that after five years of impotence, the official software charts will finally grow back some balls.

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A DOUBLE WHAMMY

Big box, little box

Microsoft likes to do things differently. And that point is proven by its plans to roll out two versions of 360. **Johnny Minkley** examines what it means for the trade...

WHAT MICROSOFT'S decision to launch two versions of Xbox 360 highlights, above all, is its acute awareness of the need to grow the installed base as fast as possible before the release of PlayStation 3.

The fully-accessorised, deluxe model at £279.99 will be the one the early adopters plump for. They tend to earmark more money to spend on games for a start, and are desperate by nature to get their hairy palms on the latest technology first. And this is the version you'll need if you want online out of the box.

And there's also the issue of bragging rights. If you're serious about your gaming, you wouldn't be seen dead with anything other than the top-of-the-range model. For die-hard fans, going for the cheaper option would be like turning up to Old Trafford in a knock-off Man United shirt.

HEAD TO HEAD

At £279.99 Xbox 360 might sound a lot, but when compared to the £209.99 model, it represents a big saving on buying separate upgrades:

Xbox 360 - £279.99
20Gb hard drive - essential for access to Live, and backwards compatibility
Wireless controller
Faceplate
Headset
High def-AV cable
Live Silver membership
Media remote

Xbox 360 Core System - £209.99
Wired controller
Faceplate
Standard AV cable

The cost of customisation:
20Gb hard drive - £69.99
Wireless controller - £32.99
Headset: £14.99
Media remote: £19.99
High def-AV cable: £19.99

£279.99, in isolation, is a lot to pay for hardware, even at launch. But the £209.99 version takes the sting out of it by offering a choice. With the cut-down offering of the Core System, Microsoft is targeting a more casual demographic. Crucially, this is the consumer who would normally only buy into the platform two to three years after launch, following a wallet-friendly price cut.

The other point to make here is that, however Microsoft paints the glorious high definition future of 360-fuelled home entertainment, it will only be experienced by a significant minority in the short-to-medium term.

HDTV doesn't mean much to the average UK consumer. You could easily spend a grand on an HD set. Easily. And you won't see a TV broadcast that supports the format until next year's FIFA World Cup.

Either way, analysts believe this pricing tactic will alter significantly the usual lifecycle.

"What Microsoft wants to do is grow the installed base quickly, get it to a peak and maintain it," says Nick Parker of Parker Consulting. "It wants Xbox to be more like a consumer electronics product that you buy and keep for seven years. There's no real peak; it goes up and is at the same level for three or four years."

> *Microsoft wants Xbox to be more like a consumer electronics product that you buy and keep for seven years.*
>
> ***Nick Parker, Parker Consulting***

The other major implication of having two versions at launch, of course, is the impact on stock supplies. As if a near-simultaneous global launch wasn't enough of a strain already, Microsoft also has to factor in two different boxes. They might be the same internally, but with detailing differences, they will be manufactured, boxed and ordered separately.

If there's a downside to the low pricing of the Core Version, it's that it leaves Microsoft with very little room for manoeuvre long-term. The typical life of a console is one of sporadic, significant price cuts to renew interest and provoke sales. If you expect a platform to last seven to 10 years and start at £200, you surely can't rely on the same tactics.

Which is interesting given that the original Xbox was seen as the brand-establishing money-waster. It seems the tactic is one of ramping up the installed base with unusual speed by targeting two demographics, then reaping the benefits of this through software sales.

And this is key for Microsoft. However sexy 360 is, however laudable its online functionality and cross-media potential, it will be defined by the quality of its games. There's nothing like a *Halo* in the 360 launch range. But then there's no PS3 yet, either. Microsoft has already said it plans to release *Halo 3* when Sony's new console hits, no doubt accompanied by a price cut. If PS3 launches at £300-plus, 360 will have a huge price advantage.

But people will undoubtedly pay more if they feel they are getting a substantially better experience. The problem with 360 not featuring a hard drive as standard means developers are more likely, certainly at first, to develop for the lowest common denominator and not take full advantage of system's potential. But it remains to be seen how much of a difference this will make in reality.

For now, Microsoft is able to satisfy those hungering for the complete next-gen experience, and allow casual consumers to play the games at a tremendously aggressive price, while offering a range of extras which should give retail some nice margin. When PS3 launches, the fun really begins.

What the hell is Gizmondo?

While the DS and PSP might grab all the headlines, Gizmondo, despite several ups and downs, is hanging in there. **Ben Parfitt** examines the company behind the device and what lies in wait for the multimedia wannabe...

DESPITE the format's curious moniker, the company behind the Gizmondo is the rather less strangely named Tiger Telematics. In 2001 it was founded to make global positioning systems, pioneering the use of GPS and GSM in business systems for professional fleet management. In other words, it makes devices that allow companies to use satellites to track their vehicles.

In 2002 Tiger decided that it wanted a piece of the entertainment market and as a result Gizmondo Europe was born, a fully-owned subsidiary of Tiger. Features-wise there are few machines that can match the Gizmondo in regards to versatility. The machine itself packs a 400Mhz processor (which is all the more impressive when you realise that the PSP only packs 333Mhz, and thanks to battery limitations developers are currently restricted to a 222Mhz clock speed), a GoForce 3D Nvidia graphics accelerator, 2.8 inch TFT colour screen and runs on the Windows CE operating system.

However, gaming is just the start with this schizophrenic system; also included is a digital camera, MP3 playback, MPEG 4 video playback, MMS messaging, Bluetooth wireless connectivity and an inbuilt Global Positioning System.

Along with support from the likes of Ubisoft and SCi, there was widespread surprise when EA announced its backing.

Microsoft, too, has been another player eager to offer support and the two companies are a constant source of industry gossip. Is the Gizmondo a trial machine for Microsoft to test the handheld waters? Is it going to get a port of *Halo*?

Tiger is aware of how crucial software support is and has ploughed money into acquiring recognised developers such as Stockholm's Indie Studios and industry veteran Warthog.

But, in a sector which has already wiped out Tapwave's Zodiac and continues to buffet a corporate giant like Nokia, what does the future hold for Tiger, which has only a fraction of the financial might of its competitors? The company has been selling off billions of dollars worth of shares in an effort to raise capital to fund marketing and development. It certainly didn't help when the Jordan F1 team sued Tiger for $3 million in March 2004 after the firm refused to make the payments relating to a sponsorship deal.

> *Would even the best promo campaign in the world prise people away from the DS and PSP?*

Inevitable questions were asked recently when it emerged that the North American launch, scheduled for August 11th, had been postponed until October. The company has accredited the rescheduling to delays in the development of its in-car satellite navigation software and of an as yet unnamed key title. Launching with such a weak software line-up at a traditionally quiet time at retail, Tiger claims, is pointless.

At the heart of people's concerns, however, is the device itself. With the PSP coming in at £179.99, the DS at £99.99 and the Gameboy Advance at £69.99, the Gizmondo's asking price of £229 seems all the more expensive. Although the SmartAd version brings that tag down to £129 for those willing to receive and run as many as three ads per day.

To Tiger's credit, it has not rested on its laurels. The 'I can do anything' ad campaign kicked off in July and hopes to finally place the machine in the mainstream. Argos, HMV, Comet and The Carphone Warehouse have recently been added to the once rather anaemic list of stockists.

Releases are growing in frequency and significance, with EA's *FIFA 2005* and *SSX3* recently launched. Gizmondo has pledged to release a 'minimum of one game a week' throughout September, one of which is said to be the eagerly anticipated *Colors*, the first ever GPS-enabled game.

Gizmondo's eventual fate will most likely hinge on its success in the US. Tiger realises this and is focused on getting it right. However, you do have to wonder if even the best promotional campaign in the world will be enough to prise the buying public away from Nintendo's and Sony's devices, both of which have gone down a storm in the US.

Nevertheless, as Tiger's CEO Sven Thiele once noted: "The gaming market is worth $25 billion annually. We don't need a large portion of that for us to be successful."

But maybe changing the awful name of the unit might be an idea...

SURVIVAL SPECIAL

PC RIP?

With next gen consoles offering the processing power, hard drive size and online gaming capabilities previously the preserve of the PC, what sort of future does the format have in games? **Neil Long** asks around...

ALL THE POMP and ceremony surrounding the impending launch of the three next generation consoles means that the industry's eye is almost exclusively trained on the console world. A stellar line up of Christmas titles sees retail licking its lips at the coming peak season. But with the ever-dependable PC format seemingly lacking the punch that it did a few short years ago, has the console world started to tempt gamers away with the lure of huge marketing budgets and a sexier image?

Looking at the figures, it appears so. "There was a drop in sales for PC games in '04, a decline that has been happening since 2001," says Kerri Davies of research firm Fancensus.com. "The market in 2004 was worth approximately £168 million against £179 million in 2003. It peaked in 2001 at £200 million."

Davies also highlights the link between the PC decline and the rise of the console: "As consoles move into a more technical area with online play, downloadable content and storage facilities being commonplace, so we may start to see the loyalty of the long-term PC gamer seriously threatened."

With fierce competition from the ever-growing console market, the Fancensus analysis also highlights the two major flaws in the PC market: "The constantly moving hardware base allows developers to be casual about optimising code and instead of better graphics you have a game that needs high end hardware for a standard gameplay experience," says Davies. "Keeping up with these upgrades makes it more expensive for the PC gamer to keep gaming.

"In addition, the PC, without costly development kits and approval processes, is far easier and cheaper to develop for. This ease has led to over-supply and has put pressure on pricing. Although roughly the same amount of products are launching at full price, they are being discounted far earlier then ever before."

With the PC market seemingly shooting itself in the foot by ever–increasing barriers to entry and super-competitive pricing, the outlook seems bleak. But Davies is keen to add that games on demand could become the format's saviour: "With more consoles ready to do battle for shelf space, the PC format will inevitably be squeezed further, possibly with only sure-fire hit titles making their way in-store.

> *We may be about to see the loyalty of the long-term PC gamer seriously threatened.*
>
> **Kerri Davies, Fancensus.com**

"However, with broadband penetration surpassing dial-up connections, download is now a viable alternative. Business models and piracy issues still need to be tested, but this could lead to episodic gameplay, easier distribution and the birth of creative talent similar to what was seen in the very early days of PC bedroom programmers."

The High Street has been quick to identify the potential of games–on–demand, with retail giants like Tesco, HMV and Virgin sounding out the possibility of offering games downloads alongside existing online services. Infinium Labs' Phantom console, Codemasters' new Funsta.com venture and the rise of services like Metaboli and Boonty certainly suggests that games–on–demand are already making an impact, but, for the moment, traditional retail remains the first port of call for PC gamers.

"Demand for games software is in line with our expectations this Christmas," says PC World's software trading manager Mark Hetherington. "It's shaping up to be as exciting as ever with some eagerly awaited titles such as *Age of Empires, Football Manager* and *Quake IV*."

"Our online service Collect@Store has been enthusiastically adopted by our customers, who love the convenience of collecting their purchase at a time of their choosing and not have to wait for delivery."

"We're very excited about the Q4 line-up for PC," adds GAME buying director Tricia Brennan. "There are many excellent new games which lend themselves well to a specialist retailer like GAME. PC customers are very informed, mainly through the 'net, so we are able to communicate directly to them with details of news and offers."

Lies, damn lies and statistics

The PC format suffers more than most from conventional wisdom. So how much of this do you know...?

- The PC games market was £168m in 2004, down from £179m in 2003.
- The PC market has become more reliant upon big hits. In 2001 the top five games accounted for around 13 per cent of the total market, compared to 19 per cent in 2004.
- New releases have stayed the same over the last four years, with around 500 new titles per year, roughly 200 more than PS2 in 2004.
- Back catalogue has diminished from over 3,000 in 2002 to around 2,500 currently in the market.
- A high concentration of PC owners also own an Xbox. Of those who prefer the PC format, PS2 ownership is far lower.
- 327 PC titles went on sale in 2004, completely unsupported by promotional funding. 90 per cent of these were budget titles.
- Two per cent of PC exclusive titles received TV, radio, outdoor or other media support.
- In 2003, 39 PC titles generated retail revenues of over £0.5m in their first quarter of release. 26 new titles hit the same milestone in 2004. The only revenue sector to see an increase in 2004 were PC titles that generated less than £50,000 in their first three months at retail.

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THE MCV INTERVIEW

ROD COUSENS CEO CODEMASTERS

MasterBuilder

In his first interview since joining Codemasters as CEO, Rod Cousens considers the future for one of the games industry's best loved and longest surviving companies. **Stuart Dinsey** listens in...

Codemasters®
GENIUS AT PLAY
"I have to deliver revenue growth, bring the company back to break-even then profitability and, if possible, pursue a flotation within three years."
Rod Cousens

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, there was a time before PlayStation. Back further, we find EA existing, but only as an American PC label that no one in Europe gave a toss about. And Kylie Minogue wasn't quite famous yet.

That's the moment Codemasters was born. Nearly 20 years on, it has had its share of ups and downs, including a particularly challenging period over the past two years. But it is still here, still independent and family run, with much to be proud of. The hit pedigree is inarguable, whilst global sales still top $100 million.

Nearly all rivals from its launch era have gone. Firebird, Elite, Imagine, CRL, Artic, Tynesoft, US Gold, Ocean, Anco, Palace. These comprised the thriving British games community that the Darling family launched into.

But this isn't a story of survival; it is one of success. With 330 staff and a number one that has stamped all over EA this summer, there is plenty to be proud of.

Trouble is, sales once hit $150m. Staff count was once 500. The US office has relocated to California and stellar profits of £23m four years ago have given way to losses.

As well as completely new IPs for the future, Codemasters will look to maximise some of its classic brands for new mobile and browser-based titles, whilst also pushing strongly into the online sector

Whilst others in the ultra-competitive world of games publishing have put in record-breaking performances, so this British games industry veteran lost a little pace.

Something had to be done. After some close shaves that nearly saw the company bought by publicly-quoted rivals on both sides of the Atlantic, Codemasters shored itself up this spring with a Venture Capital deal. In came a reported £20m, with Benchmark taking around 35 per cent.

Benchmark also put its own man in, Rod Cousens, to take some of the operational pressure off the Darling family. He joined as CEO during May, arriving with a track record of genuine success running Acclaim's international business for more than a decade – and fully recovered from the heartache caused by the US company's eventual collapse last summer.

Notwithstanding the recidivist nature of his Acclaim board, Cousens had carved a reputation as a turnaround expert, team builder and staff motivator.

Codemasters desperately needed all three.

Smiles have returned thanks to the timely success of *Brian Lara Cricket*, but one summer doesn't mean the company won't have to swallow hard for recovery.

big players, as it used to little more than a console generation ago, but it can succeed on its own terms.

"Future growth ambitions at a time of rising industry costs meant a greater cash need. To their credit, the Darling family recognised that and for some time they explored different options in order to fulfil their ambitions. But they wouldn't sell up and they haven't given up."

MCV covered the company's near-deals with both Ubisoft and Take2 towards the end of last year in considerable depth. Most observers feel that similar conversations may return one day.

But whatever the future might hold, it is now focusing on making the most of its franchise power players on lead systems (*McCrae, Micro Machines, TOCA, Operation Flashpoint* etc.), whilst also building revenues on new formats, from portables to browser-based games, that tap into under-used IPs from the company's locker.

There is also continuing investment in multi-player online game development and communities.

Importantly, some franchises are wisely being rested from the tail-end of the PS2 and Xbox era.

Most importantly, Cousens points out, the company has

Codemasters will look to build on its strengths in genres such as driving, with TOCA Race Driver 3 due early next year

"We have to rebuild and re-think. Codemasters has a reputation for quality in the most part, but had confined itself to a Euro-centric portfolio and perhaps not made enough of other opportunities," explains Cousens.

"I have to deliver revenue growth, bring the company back to break-even then profitability and, if possible, pursue a flotation within three years."

Cousens insists this isn't a salvage job; Codemasters will move forward on a firm base of resource, catalogue and new releases. It might never again dream of matching the got its confidence back and every member of this British outfit is focused on the future.

"We may not be able to compete globally across all sectors of the business with EA, Activision and the like. But we can make great games with global appeal.

"We can be fleet of foot and we can look to provide shareholder value. If we do these things then we will find our space in the business and enjoy being there."

Roll on that 20th anniversary, with a robust, profitable Codemasters enjoying every minute of it.

HIT FACTORY

Codemasters can trace its roots right back to budget games on the Sinclair Spectrum. It grew with the market as consoles took over and has long since been delivering regular number ones across a variety of genres...

TOCA Race Driver **Operation Flashpoint** MTV Music Generator **World Championship Snooker** Prince Naseem/Mike Tyson Boxing **LMA Manager** Colin McRae Rally **TOCA Touring Cars** Brian Lara Cricket **Pete Sampras Tennis** Micro Machines **Game Genie** Dizzy **BMX Simulator**

UPCOMING RELEASES

Colin McRae Rally 2005 Plus
September 1st PSP
TOCA Race Driver 2
September 1st PSP
Heroes of the Pacific
September 9th Xbox PC PS2
LMA Manager 2006
1st October PSP Xbox PC PS2
Operation Flashpoint: Elite
2nd Qtr
TOCA Race Driver 3
1st February PSP Xbox PC PS2
LMA Manager 2006
Spring Xbox 360

CONSUMER TEST: NEXT-GEN HYPE

The propaganda war

When it comes to public opinion about the next-gen battle, who is winning so far? **MCV** asked the UK's biggest games forum, www.rllmukforum.com...

At this stage no side is winning anything. We've had nothing but hype, counter claim and a lot of nonsense from all the relevant companies.

When they finally shut up bickering and get round to finalising what their hardware will do and what games will be available, then I'll be able to make some sort of judgement.

Until then, I'm happy enough playing my PS2 and, with so many strong games coming out in the next six months, the next gen isn't something that concerns me at this point.

Ian, Sheffield

Microsoft appears to be massively disorganised and uncertain of what it's doing. Sony is using blatant fibs and just generally trying to prove that other machines are worse, rather than proving that its machine is better. Nintendo doesn't have any propaganda.

I have lost respect for Sony, because of its fibbing, I've lost respect for Microsoft, because it is rushing into an incremental change in generation. No change in respect for Nintendo, because it's done nothing to affect me in respect to its next-generation console. The DS is another matter – it's great, respect to that.

Tim, New Cross

My take is that Sony won the post-E3 propaganda war with the PS3 'rendered' movies. Most educated gamers know that the final games (or at least the early ones for this next-gen) won't look like that, but looping those videos (*Killzone*, etc) on TVs in GAME shops will likely convince a lot of gullible buyers to hold off on a 360 and wait for PS3.

Personally I do believe what MS is saying, but have less faith in Sony.

Nintendo hasn't shown anything of value, and not until we see what is 'Revolutionary' will we be in a position to have a valid opinion either way.

But Nintendo's pricing of the GB Micro shows it still has a thing or two to learn about the market.

Alan, Crawford

Sony can hype anything better than anyone.

I'm getting a PS3 first. Not because I believe anything Sony has said, but because the X360 simply hasn't appealed.

Soong, Brighton

Well I'd say Microsoft has the most solid stuff so far, but that's to be expected with the Xbox 360 launch round the corner. It has games announced and spec announced.

Sony (read: Ken Kutaragi) is just throwing petty and quite cringeworthy stabs at other companies around like there's no tomorrow. I don't think it realises that, unfortunately, those stabs are likely to receive more attention than the latest processor numbers.

And Nintendo hasn't really done anything

Being a Nintendo fan, it's kind of annoying to say that Microsoft is probably 'winning' at the moment because it simply seems to be getting on with things the most.

Dom, Gloucestershire

> *I'm happy playing PS2. With so many strong games out in the next six months, next-gen isn't something that concerns me.*
>
> **Ian, Sheffield**

Microsoft is first out of the blocks so is surely winning; it's shown playable builds of games and is beginning to drown us with trailers and features about the first wave of software.

Sony has really only produced counter-measures effective enough to keep interest in the PS3.

Now that time has passed on its E3 showing, most who saw it (and were initially impressed) have become cynical about what potential was really demonstrated.

Nintendo is playing the slowest game, content to let the two biggest companies in the world wage war.

It can't compete this generation nor in the next, so perhaps it can afford to approach the next generation differently.

Patrick, Northern Ireland

Who can tell for sure? My personal impression is that Microsoft seems to be more aggressive in its marketing than Sony and Nintendo.

Nintendo hasn't begun to hype Revolution yet and instead seems to be eager to tell the gameplayers that Nintendo is all about the actual games and the entertainment values of them, not system specs and terraflops.

I don't like either Sony or Microsoft's way of doing propaganda.

Stig, Norway

It certainly seems that with each generation of hardware comes greater cynicism among consumers.

Entirely understandable, really – this will be the third significant launch of console hardware that I've followed with any keenness and each time the companies wheel out the bullshit, pretty tech-demos etc, etc... is anyone really surprised when launch games don't live up to expectations?

That said, it's naive to think that hype doesn't have an effect. Even if there's a growing proportion of consumers who have seen it all before, there are plenty of people who lap up this sort of thing.

I'd quite happily stick with my GameCube and Xbox for a while yet, especially given the quality of recent releases. But that's not to say I won't be buying an Xbox 360 and/or Revolution. If I want to play the latest games, I won't have much of a choice.

Jon, London

My heart soared and my eyes filled with hope when I saw that *Killzone 2* footage. The sane part of me said 'pre-rendered'; my heart hoped it wasn't.

With Xbox 360 the conference had a weird iPod/MTV feel to it which kind of alienated me as an older gamer. Microsoft is going for the beautiful people, though it's nice to see it looks a lot better than the original Xbox. Microsoft itself is very much into streaming media, and Xbox 360 fits more into this philosophy than the original Xbox.

Xbox Live will definitely be the thing which gives Microsoft the edge – when it announced Live, people were kind of unsure of its motivation but now it makes perfect sense.

Nintendo is scarily turning into Sega. They seem to be the also-rans, though I was more excited about the DS online news than the Revolution. The old git inside of me is looking forward more to the back catalogue of Nintendo titles through Revolution than actual Revolution titles.

Nintendo needs to get more original IPs on the table. Revolution could shake off the kid-ified image of the Gamecube, though it does feel like it's still not 100 per cent sure itself as to how things are going to turn out.

Steve, Wirral

The proganda war was won by Sony a long time ago. It works the hype machine like no other. Everyone was amazed by the PS3 footage. They all thought it was real time. Rendering is such a great tool isn't it...?

Mike, Nottingham

Sony disappointed due to the pre-rendered footage, and lack of in-game footage at E3.

Microsoft disappointed due to the generic and dull line-up it has for launch – absolutely nothing appeals to me. And finally Nintendo disappointed by showing nothing but a black box and no controller. Backwards compatibility with NES, SNES, N64 games did impress, though.

Ed, Chiswick

I'm expecting the next generation to become a huge money pit for Sony, Microsoft and those publishers and developers who ally themselves with them. Nintendo? I don't know, but it seems to do a very good job of making money...

Ruariaidh, Dundee

Sony is winning, for the moment. But I think that its superiority is built on quicksand foundations as there is no way that the PS3 will live up to what it's saying it will and, unlike the PS2 launch, Sony has some real competitors this time who can out-punch them.

It's extremely early days to tell which way the market is going to jump, and inevitably the real decision of consumers will come down to what the games themselves actually look like.

Kelly, Surrey

PR hacks are well-paid, professional bullshitters. But I'm inclined to at least listen to what Nintendo has to say as its claims in the past have proved to be far closer to actual reality.

It's not that Nintendo is intrinsically any more or less 'honest' than Sony or Microsoft, simply that it tends not to get involved in the schoolyard pissing contest that are Sony/Microsoft's bullshit hardware claims. Hardware willy-waving will not influence me.

Paul, High Wycombe

PR hacks are just well-paid, professional bullshitters. But I'm inclined to listen to what Nintendo says.

Paul, High Wycombe

Sony is winning the propoganda war. It's set out its stall and is trying to talk to a wider audience than Microsoft (which is still doggedly chasing American teenagers) and Nintendo (which has been frustratingly quiet and conservative).

Everything at this point should be taken with a pinch of salt. That said, none of the hardware manufacturers are making claims as extravagant as Sony made about the PS2. Perhaps because everything is being scrutinised closely this time round.

Rob, London

Sadly it appears that Sony is winning the propaganda war. As other people have pointed out, it basically flat-out lied at E3 with its footage of 'what it wished games would look like'. And like the *Final Fantasy VII* adverts which were pure FMV, people lapped it up. Idiots.

I'm believing most of what Microsoft says because I haven't really seen anything to the contrary and I'm believing nothing that Sony says.

Graham, Stratford-Upon-Avon

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Reports mean nothing

Raising a few hackles amongst the publishing community, Forbes recently issued a report which claimed games publishers are happy to ignore piracy. This is far from the truth, argues Macrovision's **Tom DuBois**...

A RECENT report by Forbes.com argued that games publishers 'ignore' piracy. It cited claims from two anonymous contributors that publishers "might be complacent because business is good and because piracy is far more prevalent in PC-based games, [which are] a declining business". It compared the attitude of the games industry with those of the music and film businesses. Just because we're not suing our games customers, we're being complacent, it suggested.

Macrovision provides copy protection solutions for the three industries in question. We work with IP holders across all entertainment media. So we're in a unique position to endorse the article if it's correct, or highlight areas in which, in our experience, it falls short.

In our view: It falls short.

Forbes' view was a little simplistic. It swept aside the differences in protecting three forms of digital media and thereby derived a conclusion which could unfairly convince shareholders, analysts and investors that our publicly-listed companies couldn't care less about maximising the value of their entertainment products.

The fact is, publishers do care about piracy. It's just that the challenges for gaming are poles apart from those faced by the music and film industries. Grouping them together under one core issue leaves no scope for discussing the unique challenges faced by the games industry.

Unlike movies and music, which deal with single, static formats, it's impossible to group both PC and console together, which is where the Forbes research veers off course. PCs have no on-board copy protection, so every commercial release requires a third-party solution from companies such as Macrovision. Console hardware, however, has in-built security – use of which forms a percentage of the standard format-holder per disc royalty fee – which ideally wouldn't require any additional anti-piracy measures.

In the past, console copy protection was rigorous, and usually only circumnavigated by soldering a chip to the main circuit board. This was above and beyond the skill and desire of the casual gamer; it was the determined ones who would invalidate warranties by employing this method. And it was the determined ones who up until recently could not be stopped.

But now console hacking approaches are shared on the Internet and rapidly improved. Currently, several 'software only' hacks are available which make it relatively easy for casual gamers to pirate console games.

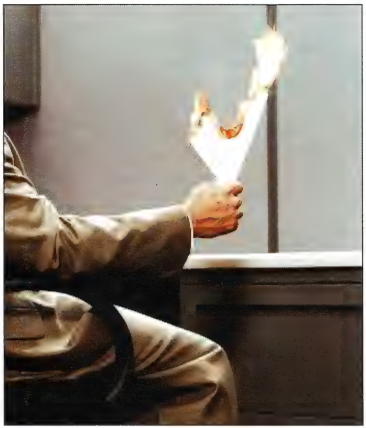
The console manufacturers have responded slowly – once a console platform ships, it's security is not updated much, if at all. This has been a point of contention for publishers who expect protection for the royalty fee they are paying. Some publishers have developed their own additional security measures and others have expressed interest in third party anti-piracy solutions.

Once a game is stripped of its copy protection, its distribution across peer-to-peer networks accelerates, and anyone with modified hardware could download these files, and run from a burnt CD or DVD. However, new P2P anti-piracy technologies such as our Hawkeye now provide an immediate solution for IP holders who wish to protect their copyright. It requires no bespoke code in-game, and can be activated as soon as a rogue file appears on the P2P network.

Far from fearing the threat of online, games companies are finding ways in which to use it. Without Xbox Live, it's fair to assume that the number of modified Xboxes would be significantly higher. As soon as a system goes online, security checks can be performed and action taken against those found with illegal modifications.

> *Publishers do care about piracy. It's just that the challenges for gaming are poles apart from those faced by the music and film industries.*

We've seen how *World Of Warcraft* with unique licensing and payment methods for the Chinese market and *Half-Life 2*, through Steam, have really rooted out those with illegal copies. And companies such as Trymedia have developed secure delivery systems for online purchases.



Forbes' report on piracy in the games industry falls short of the mark, says Macrovision

Whilst piracy will never be totally eradicated, we're better equipped than ever to defeat the threat.

Copy protection is like virus protection; you need to continually monitor the threat and update the response. Anti-piracy measures adopted by Microsoft make headlines the world over; games companies prefer to be more discreet, quietly upgrading security rather than shouting from the rooftops about it.

So whilst reports such as the one issued by Forbes do help put the issues we face on the agenda, it's time that we stopped kidding ourselves that halting piracy is a one-stop solution which can be applied to movies, music and games software.

But just because we don't publicise what's going on behind the scenes, it doesn't mean we're ignoring it.

Has something really wound you up recently? Want to get it off your chest? This section is for you to air your views. Email Jaccuse@intentmedia.co.uk

PERSONNEL

Koei looks East for new VP

... as Katashima joins from the Japan HQ, whilst the firm hires Foley as PR and marketing manager. Meanwhile, iFone adds a threesome, Koch makes six new signings and Edge Online goes French...

iFONE ■ A trio of appointments at the mobile games specialist this week, as **JOSHUA MILTON**, **BARRY WHITE** and **JOHN CROSS** bolster the company's ranks. Milton joins the firm's US team as a producer, moving from a similar role at Disney Mobile, having worked on titles like *Finding Nemo*, *Pirates of the Carribean* and *King Arthur*. White joins iFone as European account manager, having previously worked for a number of years developing and marketing his own network of mobile entertainment websites. Cross arrives at iFone as web designer, and will help develop dedicated iFone channels on operator portals.

KOEI ■ As part of Koei's continuing expansion, **NAOKI KATASHIMA** *(pictured right)* has joined from the Japan offices to become Europe senior vice president. Katashima is joined by fellow new recruit **MIKEY FOLEY**. Foley has been appointed as PR and marketing manager *(pictured far right)*, having previously occupied a similar role at Digital Jesters.

FUTURE ■ **MICHAEL FRENCH** has been named as the new editor of *Edge Online*. French has previously worked as reviews editor of *Official PlayStation Magazine* and was formerly deputy editor of *MCV*. The appointment comes as *Edge* launches a weekly email newsletter and heralds the return of its online discussion forum to complement the monthly magazine. "As the first dedicated member of staff for the site I want to make sure that even more gamers bookmark us and visit it daily," said French.

KOCH ■ Following the launch of publishing label Deep Silver, Koch Media has taken on a further six new recruits. New in the sales department are **MICHAEL KALINA** and **EMMA LEWIS**, who join as sales executive and sales co-ordinator respectively. **MATT DUFF** joins fresh from university as product manager at Deep Silver, with **MICHAEL STEPHENS** also joining to work alongside the publishing team as graphic designer. **ALI PARKIN** has also joined as PR assistant, and will be working with games websites and journalists to raise Koch Media's profile. Finally, **HELEN CASEY** has joined as financial controller from software company Goldmine, where she was European finance director.

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Product Manager's	£22K - £30K + Bens + Bonus	West and North) London
Brand Manager	£35K - £40K + Bens + Bonus	Midlands
MMO Brand Manager	£25K - £35K + Bonus + bens	Midlands
Product Manager (games magazines)	£Flexible	London
PS2 and Networked Gaming Brand Mgr	£35K - £36K + Benefits + Bonus	
Market Analyst/Researcher	Up to £40K + bens	London
Senior Brand Manager	£40K + Bonus + Bens	West London
Global Brand Manager	£Comp + Bens + Bonus + Shares	Surrey
UK Product Manager	£Excellent + Benefits + Bonus	Berkshire

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Creative/Print Coordinator	£Flexible package	Northants
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GAME OF LIFE

SCOTT MORRISON

Cynics need not worry, Scott Morrison may have arrived in the games business this summer following a spell as head of marketing for Levi's but he's no suit. He's a passionate gamer.

His father worked for 1980s Brit home computer maker Apricot and he got a Vectrex (Milton Bradley's shortlived console) for Christmas in 1983, when he was 11.

After that it was a C64 and, before Levi's, he worked for an agency called Slice which did some work on the launch of Xbox. His plans at Activision include giving EA a run for its money this autumn.

FACTFILE

Age: 31
Job: UK Marketing Director
Company: Activision
Home: Islington
Car: BMW
First Love: Head Over Heels (Ocean)
Most Wanted: GUN (Neversoft)

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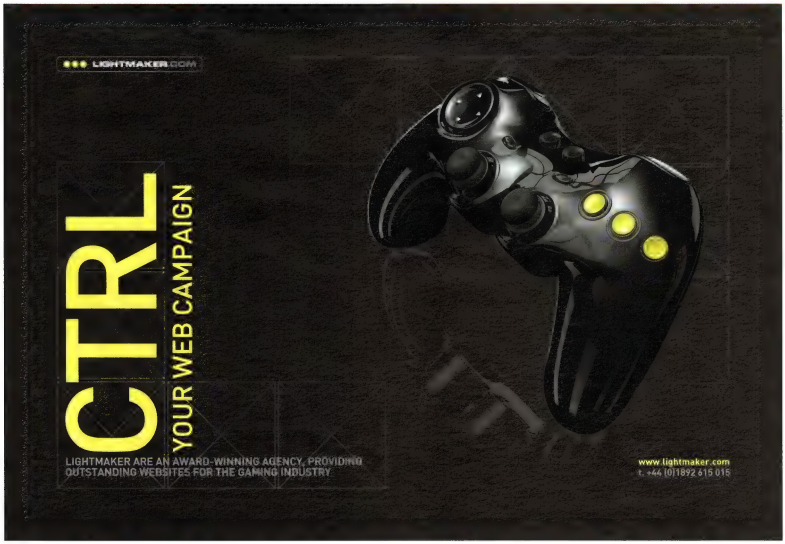

Exactly 10 years after Sony launched its first games machine in the UK, *MCV* will publish a souvenir publication celebrating the partnerships and perspiration that made it all happen.

ten

PlayStation®

From 1995 to 2005 and beyond. The full story.

PSTen will be published with a special edition of MCV appearing on Thursday September 29th. If you would like to participate with a tale or two, contact Dave.Roberts@intentmedia.co.uk

MCV's product guide covers everything a store needs to keep ahead of the game. This week, Spider-Man swings back onto the High Street...

RETAILONLY

Ultimate Spider-Man **Publisher:** Activision **Release Date:** 14/10 **Formats:** PS2,Xbox,DS,GBA,PC

Activision has turned to the Ultimate Spider-Man comics for inspiration as this blockbuster franchise returns once more

56

RECOMMENDED

This week MCV looks at Ultimate Spider-Man, Hello Kitty Roller Rescue, Burnout Legends, Sonic Gems, EyeToy Kinetic and Rainbow Six 4: Lockdown

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ON THE RADAR

MCV picks out the best of the imminent releases

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NEW RELEASES

All titles due over the next two months

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MARGIN MAKER

Boost your in-store offering and your profits

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REVIEW CODE

What the press makes of the latest releases

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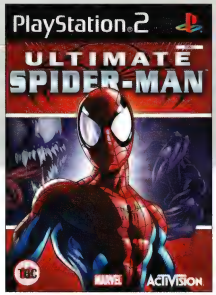
SPIDEY STARS IN HIS ULTIMATE GAME

Also this week EA's Burnout Legends is a hot prospect at retail, as are Xplosiv's Hello Kitty Roller Rescue, Sega's Sonic Gems, Eyetoy: Kinetic from SCEE and Ubisoft's Rainbow Six Lockdown...

ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN *PS2, Xbox, GC, DS, GBA, PC*

ACTIVISION.

STREET DATE: ..October 14th
STREET PRICE: .....Various
DISTRIBUTOR: ....Centresoft
CONTACT: 01753 756100



Activision bucked the trend last year when *Spider-Man 2* proved not only to be a great game of the film, but also a great game in its own right.

However, with no Spidey film on the cards this year, Activision has had to think of something new to get another *Spider-Man* title on the shelves. Having raided the comic archives, the publisher came up with *Ultimate Spider-Man*.

Offering the same open-ended gameplay but with stylised comic-visuals, this is looking like another huge Spidey title that will please both the critics and fans of the web-slinger.

BURNOUT LEGENDS *PSP*

EA

STREET DATE: September 16th
STREET PRICE: £34.99
DISTRIBUTOR: ....Centresoft
CONTACT: 01932 450000

When *Burnout* first hit consoles it was an enjoyable but limited arcade racer. *Burnout 2* built upon the formula well and enjoyed a deservedly strong performance at retail. By the time *Burnout 3* reached stores last year the game had developed into one of the most intense racing experiences ever created.

Short bursts of arcade racing are ideally suited to the handheld format so *Burnout Legends* has the potential to be a killer app for Sony's PSP. As well as featuring several levels from the first three games, this update also offers a host of new cars and features to get PSP owners all revved up.

THE INCREDIBLE
HULK
ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION
The destruction starts
September 9th
Telephone 0121 625 7157
CENTRESOFT
VIVENDI UNIVERSAL GAMES
CentreSoft Ltd, 6 Pavilion Drive, Hollford, Birmingham B6 7BB tel: 0121 3625 3896 fax: 0121 3625 3236 w: www.centresoft.co.uk

Looking beyond the current release schedule to highlight the biggest blockbusters further down the line...

NINTENDOGS
DS
NINTENDO
The Japanese have gone bonkers over this virtual pet title, and with us Brits notorious dog lovers, retail will be drooling over this one.
OCTOBER 7th

THE X FACTOR
BLACK BEAN
PS2/PC
The Italian publisher has scored its first major licence with *The X Factor*, with a major hit on the cards if the masses take notice.
OCTOBER 21st

POKEMON EMERALD
NINTENDO
GBA
Kiddie crack returns in the form of *Pokémon*. Watch as a nation of kids mug their grans and pawn their TVs when this comes out.
OCTOBER 21st

TONY HAWK'S AMERICAN WASTELAND
ACTIVISION
PS2/XBOX/GC
The world's most famous skater will be busting moves on the home consoles once more this Q4.
OCTOBER 28th

SONIC GEMS COLLECTION *PS2, GC*

SEGA

STREET DATE: September 30th
STREET PRICE: £19.99
DISTRIBUTOR: ..... Gem
CONTACT: 020 8995 3399

Sega's bumper pack of retro classics will have gamers shedding a nostalgic tear as they flock to snap up this compilation of Arcade, Mega CD, Saturn and Game Gear titles.

Top of the bill is Sonic CD, the critically-acclaimed time travelling adventure which originally saw the light of day on Mega CD.

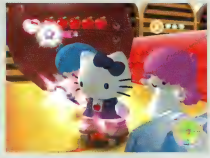
Arcade rarity *Sonic The Fighters* gives the Sonic universe a beat 'em up flavour, meanwhile *Sonic R* is a Saturn original which places the emphasis on racing.

No less than six Game Gear titles are also included, meaning there's a feast of '90s classics crammed into this budget release.

HELLO KITTY ROLLER RESCUE *PS2, Xbox, GC, PC*

XPLOSIV

STREET DATE: September 9th
STREET PRICE: £19.99
DISTRIBUTOR: ..... Open
CONTACT: 020 8343 7337



For years the Hello Kitty brand has enjoyed a cult status, adorning bags and purses all over Camden Market and other equally trendy locations. Now though, the little minx is making a move into the mainstream, with the video game just part of the multimedia onslaught.

Hello Kitty Roller Rescue takes the form of a 3D action adventure, featuring an assortment of characters ranging from Kitty herself to the similarly odd sounding Bad Badtz Maru and Cinnamoroll.

Kids and their parents will be lapping this up, especially at the budget price point.

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THE WARRIORS
ROCKSTAR
PS2/XBOX
Rockstar returns with this super violent game of the classic 1979 movie. Expect the obligatory controversy when little Timmy gets his hands on this one.
OCTOBER

FOOTBALL MANAGER 2006
SEGA
PC/MAC
Gamers can wipe the smug grin off a virtual Mourinho's face in this newly updated version of the best-selling franchise.
NOVEMBER 4th

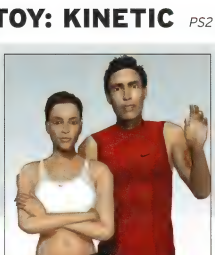
THE CHRONICLES OF NARNIA
BVG
PS2
The PS2 exclusive will be helped no end by the small matter of the multi-million dollar blockbuster heading to cinemas this Christmas.
NOVEMBER 25th

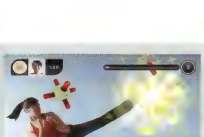
THE SIMS 2
EA
PS2/XBOX/GC/GBA
Expect serious mainstream success for this console version of EA's mega franchise. If the PC version is anything to go by, it's a dead cert for retailers.
Q4 2005

EYETOY: KINETIC *PS2*

SONY

STREET DATE: September 23rd
STREET PRICE: £39.99
DISTRIBUTOR: ..... Centresoft
CONTACT: 020 7911 8152





Along with titles like *SingStar*, Sony's EyeToy titles have dispelled the myth that console owners are all anti-social losers.

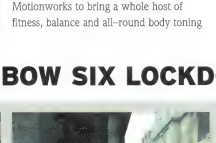
This latest release from SCEE's London studios has been developed with Nike Motionworks to bring a whole host of fitness, balance and all-round body toning challenges to health-conscious PS2 owners.

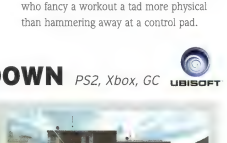
With a personal trainer mode to structure and sequence the gamer's excercises and the instantly recogniseable Nike branding, this should be a hit at retail with PS2 owners who fancy a workout a tad more physical than hammering away at a control pad.

TOM CLANCY'S RAINBOW SIX LOCKDOWN *PS2, Xbox, GC*

UBISOFT

STREET DATE: September 9th
STREET PRICE: £39.99
DISTRIBUTOR: ..... Pinnacle
CONTACT: 01923 838230





Team Rainbow returns once more to tackle an unwholesome bunch of terrorists threatening to use chemical weapons, and this time they've targeted individual members of the eponymous Rainbow Six.

Lockdown invites gamers to take control of the funkily-named Ding Chavez and Dieter Weber to sneak their way through a darker storyline with a variety of state-of-the-art gadgets. It also promises all–new rag-doll physics as well as hugely expanded online multiplayer modes for PS2 and Xbox.

With a mix of new features and old favourites, Ubi's latest will please all comers.

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FAHRENHEIT TURNS UP THE HEAT

Atari's first person thriller will be burning up the charts as Ubisoft unleashes Tom Clancy once more...

[JUST STARTED]

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: ULTIMATE DESTRUCTION

RELEASED: 10/9/2005
FORMAT: PS2/XBOX/PC
DISTRIBUTOR: CENTRESOFT
CONTACT: 0121 625 3908

THE INCREDIBLE HULK is one of the most recognisable superheroes around, and VU Games hopes to prove that there's no need for the backing of a blockbuster movie to ensure chart success.

Ultimate Destruction is a smash 'em up that will appeal to anyone with an appetite for destruction, and fortunately this doesn't just mean old Guns 'N' Roses fans.

With its unashamedly populist free-roaming approach and hugely satisfying smash and grab gameplay, retailers without plentiful stock of VU Games' latest will be similarly green when the big fella hits retail next week.

Hulk has starred on the cover of several specialist magazines already, and a positive critical response means that VU Games has grabbed the attention of gamers who fancy a little destructive relief.

TITLE	FORMAT	GENRE	PUBLISHER	TELEPHONE	DISTRIBUTOR	RELEASED
The Incredible Hulk: Ultimate Destruction	PS2/Xbox/GC	Action/Adventure	VU Games	0121 625 3908	Centresoft	September 9th
Pilot Down: Behind Enemy Lines	PS2/Xbox/PC	Action/Adventure	Oxygen	01933 446 424	Centresoft	September 9th
Bet On Soldier	PC	FPS	Digital Jesters	01707 871516	Pinnacle	September 9th
Zoo Tycoon	DS	Strategy	THQ	01483 767 656	Advantage	September 9th
WWE Day of Reckoning 2	GC	Wrestling	THQ	01483 767 656	Advantage	September 9th
Chicken Shoot 2	GBA	Platformer	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	September 9th
Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Lockdown	PS2/Xbox/GC	Stealth	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	September 9th
ER The Game	PC	Strategy	Legacy Interactive	01293 582 630	Mindscape	September 9th
Fahrenheit	PS2/Xbox/PC	Action/Adventure	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	September 9th
Musashi: Samurai Legend	PS2	Action/Adventure	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	September 9th
Colosseum: Road to Freedom	PS2	Action	Koei	01462 476310	Open	September 9th
Megaman Zero 4	GBA	Action/Adventure	Capcom	020 8846 2250	Open	September 16th
Megaman Battle Network 5: Double Team	DS	Action/Adventure	Capcom	020 8846 2250	Open	September 16th
Total Overdose	PS2/Xbox/PC	Action/Adventure	Eidos	0121 625 3906	Centresoft	September 16th
Call of Cthulhu: Dark Corners of Earth	PS2/Xbox	Action/Adventure	Take 2	01753 496 613	Gem	September 16th
Kuon	PS2	Action/Adventure	Digital Jesters	01707 871516	Pinnacle	September 16th
Burnout Legends	PSP	Racing	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 16th
Burnout: Revenge	PS2/Xbox	Racing	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 16th
Madden NFL 2006	PS2/Xbox/GC	Sports	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 16th
NHL 2006	PS2/Xbox/GC/PC	Sports	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 16th
The Sims 2: Nightlife	PC	Life Sim	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 16th
Scooby Doo Unmasked	PS2/Xbox/GC/GBA	Action	THQ	01483 767 656	Advantage	September 16th
Heroes of the Pacific	PS2/Xbox/PC	Flight Sim	Codemasters	01926 814132	Centresoft	September 23rd
Dragonshard	PC	Action/Adventure	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	September 23rd
Madden NFL 2006	PC	Sports	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 23rd
Top Spin	PS2	Sports	Take 2	01753 496 613	Gem	September 23rd
EyeToy: Kinetic	PS2	Fitness	Sony	020 7911 8152	Centresoft	September 23rd
Rally Manager	PC	Racing	GMX	020 8309 3600	Pinnacle	September 23rd
Coded Arms	PSP	Strategy	Konami	020 8987 5730	Open	September 23rd
Rebel Raiders	PS2/PC	Action/Adventure	Digital Jesters	01707 871516	Pinnacle	September 23rd
System Rush	N-Gage	Racing	Nokia	07973 333 553	Gem	September 23rd
Sniper Elite	PS2/Xbox/PC	Stealth	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	September 23rd
Chicken Shoot	GBA	Platformer	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	September 23rd
Evil Dead Regeneration	PS2/Xbox/PC	Action	THQ	01483 767 656	Advantage	September 23rd
Myst V: End of Ages	PC/Mac	Graphic Adventure	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	September 23rd
American Chopper	PS2/Xbox/PC	Racing	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	September 23rd
Fable: The Lost Chapters	PC	RPG	Microsoft	0870 6010100	Gem	September 23rd
Castlevania: Dawn of Sorrow	DS	Action/Adventure	Konami	020 8987 5730	Open	September 29th
Madden NFL 2006	DS	Sports	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 30th
Advance Wars DS	DS	Strategy	Nintendo	01932 895390	Open	September 30th
Atari Masterpieces Vol 1	N-Gage	Retro	Nokia	07973 333 553	Gem	September 30th
Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks	PS2/Xbox	Fighting	Midway	020 7382 1720	Pinnacle	September 30th
Drive3r	GBA	Racing	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	September 30th
One Piece: Grand Battle	PS2	Adventure	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	September 30th
NBA Live '06	PS2/Xbox/GC/PC	Sports	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 30th
The Nightmare Before Xmas	PS2/Xbox	Action/Adventure	Capcom	02082 222 1000	Open	September 30th
Beatdown: Fists of Vengeance	PS2/Xbox	Action	Capcom	020 8846 2880	Open	September 30th
Conflict: Global Storm	PS2/Xbox/PC	RTS	Eidos	0121 625 3906	Centresoft	September 30th
Disney's Cinderella: Magical Dreams	GBA	Platform	THQ	01483 767 656	Advantage	September 30th
Ed, Edd 'n Eddy	GBA	Kids	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	September 30th
FIFA 06	PS2/Xbox/GC/PC/GBA	Sports	EA	01932 450000	Pinnacle	September 30th
WWTBAM Junior	GBA	Quiz	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	September 30th
Samurai Jack	GBA	Action	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	September 30th
Far Cry Instincts	Xbox	FPS	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	September 30th
Barbarian Invasion	PC	RTS	Sega	020 8995 3399	Gem	September 30th

[FORMAT HIGHLIGHTS]

The biggest releases from the schedule on individual formats

Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks
Midway/Sept 30th

FIFA '06
EA/Sept 30th

Brothers in Arms: Earned in Blood
Ubisoft/Oct 7th

Far Cry: Instincts
Ubisoft/Sept 30th

Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2006
EA/Oct 7th

Spartan: Total Warrior
Sega/October 7th

Megaman Zero 4
Capcom/Sept 16th

Scooby Doo Unmasked
THQ/Sept 16th

Street Racing Syndicate
Zoo/September

WWE Day of Reckoning
THQ/September 9th

Sonic Gems
Sega/Sept 30th

Ultimate Spider-Man
Activision/Oct 14th

World Rally Championship	PSP	Racing	Sony	020 7911 8152	Centresoft	**September**
Ghost in the Shell	PSP	FPS	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	**September**
Lemmings	PSP	Puzzle	Sony	020 7911 8152	Centresoft	**September**
SOCOM 3	PS2	Action/Adventure	Sony	020 7911 8152	Centresoft	**September**
SpyToy	PS2	EyeToy	Sony	020 7911 8152	Centresoft	**September**
Rugby Challenge 2006	PS2/Xbox/PC	Sports	Hip	020 7808 7097	Open	**September**
Street Racing Syndicate	GBA	Racing	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**September**
Dungeon Siege 2	PC	RPG	Microsoft	0870 6010100	Gem	**September**
World Poker Tour	PS2/Xbox/PC/PSP	Poker Sim	Take 2	01753 496 613	Gem	**September**
Monster Guest	GBA	Action/Adventure	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**September**
Peter Pan	PS2	Action/Adventure	Disney Interactive	020 8222 1413	Open	**September**
World Rally Championship Evolution	PS2	Racing	Sony	020 7911 8152	Centresoft	**September**
Genji	PS2	Action/Adventure	Sony	020 7911 8152	Centresoft	**September**
Swords of Destiny	PS2	Action/Adventure	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	**September**
Power Rangers - SPD	PS2/GBA	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September**
Garfield 2: Saving Arlene	PS2/PC	Action	Hip	020 7808 7097	Open	**September**
Dungeon Lords	PC	Strategy	Legacy Interactive	00299 582 630	Mindscape	**September**
Coded Arms	PSP	FPS	Konami	020 8987 5730	Open	**September**
Dynasty Warriors 5	Xbox	Action/Strategy	Koei	01462 476030	Open	**September**
Meteos	DS	Puzzle	Nintendo	01932 895390	Pinnacle	**September**
America's Army: Rise of a Soldier	PS2/Xbox	FPS	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	**Q3**
Star Wars Episode III Revenge of the Sith	PSP	Action/Adventure	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	**Q3**
Title Bout Championship Boxing	PC	Sport	Fusion Software	01933 682 007	Pinnacle	**October 7th**
Phoenix Wright Ace Attorney	DS	Strategy	Capcom	020 8846 2250	Open	**October 7th**
Armoured Core: Nexus	PS2	Action/Adventure	Digital Jesters	01707 871516	Pinnacle	**October 7th**
Kingdom Under Fire: Heroes	Xbox	Action	Deep Silver	0870 0270985	Koch	**October 7th**
Juka and the Monophonic Menace	GBA	Platformer	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**October 7th**
Nintendogs	DS	Pet Sim	Nintendo	01932 895390	Open	**October 7th**
FIFA 06	DS	Sports	EA	01932 4500000	Pinnacle	**October 7th**
Darkwatch	PS2/Xbox	FPS	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	**October 7th**
Witch	GBA	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**October 7th**
Brothers In Arms: Earned in Blood	PS2/Xbox/PC	RTS	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	**October 7th**
Shattered Union	Xbox/PC	Strategy	Take 2	01753 496 613	Gem	**October 7th**
Tiger Woods PGA Tour 2006	PS2/Xbox/GC/PC/PSP	Sports	EA	01932 4500000	Pinnacle	**October 7th**
Vietcong 2	PC	Strategy	Take 2	01753 496 613	Gem	**October 7th**
The Nightmare Before Xmas	GBA	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**October 7th**
Spartan: Total Warrior	PS2/Xbox/GC	Strategy	Sega	020 8995 3399	Gem	**October 7th**
Geist	GC	FPS	Nintendo	01932 895390	Open	**October 7th**
Heart of Empire: ROME	PC	God Sim	Deep Silver	0870 0270985	Koch	**October 14th**
Bratz: Rock Angelz	PS2/GC/PC/GBA	Platform	TH0	01403 767 656	Advantage	**October 14th**
Blitzkrieg II	PC	RTS	CDV	0870 0270985	Koch	**October 14th**
NASCAR 06: Total Team Control	PS2/Xbox	Racing	EA	01932 4500000	Pinnacle	**October 14th**
Cabela's Big Game Hunter 2005	PS2/Xbox/GBA	Shooting	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**October 14th**
Ultimate Spider-Man	PS2/Xbox/GC/DS/GBA/PC	Action/Adventure	Activision	01753 756100	Centresoft	**October 14th**
X-Men Legends II: Rise of Apocalypse	PS2/Xbox/GC/PSP/PC	Action RPG	Activision	01753 756100	Centresoft	**October 14th**
Getting Up: Contents Under Pressure	PS2/Xbox/PC	Action/Adventure	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	**October 14th**
Serious Sam 2	PC/Xbox	FPS	Take 2	01753 496 613	Gem	**October 14th**
GameSys	PS2/PC	FPS	Deep Silver	0870 0270985	Koch	**October 21st**
DbT	PS2/PC	Action/Adventure	Deep Silver	8001649 1341	Koch	**October 21st**
Duel Masters: Shadow of the Code	GBA	Action	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	**October 21st**
The 1 Factor	PS2/PC	Singing	Black Bean	0208 309 3710	Pinnacle	**October 21st**
X3: The Reunion	PC	Action/Adventure	Deep Silver	0870 0270985	Koch	**October 21st**
Pokemon Emerald	GBA	Action/Adventure	Nintendo	01932 895390	Open	**October 21st**
Dragonball Z Budokai: Tenkaichi	PS2	Action	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	**October 21st**
FIFA 06	PSP	Sports	EA	01932 4500000	Pinnacle	**October 21st**

[REVIEWS]

THE GAMES MAGS' VIEWS ON THE LATEST RELEASES

FAHRENHEIT

It had its doubters early on, but Atari's Fahrenheit is looking like it could be a landmark title.

RELEASED: SEPT 9TH
PLAY 90%
EUROGAMER 9/10

TOCA RACE DRIVER 2

The PSP impresses again with another console-worthy title that feels anything but pocket-sized.

RELEASED: SEPT 1ST
PLAY 8/10
OPS2 8/10

XPLOSIV SAYS HELLO KITTY

Hello Kitty Roller Rescue arrives in stores as Phoenix releases a trio of titles...

TITLE	FORMAT	GENRE	PUBLISHER	TELEPHONE	DISTRIBUTOR	RELEASED
CSI Dark Motives	PC	Adventure	Focus Multimedia	01889 570156	Interactive Ideas	**September 9th**
Pacific Fighters	PC	Flight Sim	Focus Multimedia	01889 570156	Interactive Ideas	**September 9th**
Urban Football Championship	PS2	Sports	Phoenix	+31 40 3680144	Open	**September 9th**
Kiddies Party Pack	PS2	Kids'	Phoenix	+31 40 3680144	Open	**September 9th**
Clumsy Shumsy	PS2	EyeToy	Phoenix	+31 40 3680144	Open	**September 9th**
The Great British Football Quiz	PS2	Quiz	Liquid Games	01933 442 660	Centresoft	**September 9th**
Hello Kitty Roller Rescue	PS2/Xbox/GC/PC	Action	Xplosiv	020 8343 7337	Open	**September 9th**
Brother Bear	PC	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September 16th**
Lilo and Stitch	PC	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September 16th**
EverQuest II: Desert of Flames	PC	MMORPG	Ubisoft	01923 838230	Pinnacle	**September 16th**
Alexander	PC	RTS	Focus Multimedia	01889 570156	Interactive Ideas	**September 16th**
Gauntlet/Rampart	GBA	Retro	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**September 16th**
Paper Boy/Rampage	GBA	Retro	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**September 16th**
Spyhunter/Supersprint	GBA	Retro	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**September 16th**
Lion King Operation Pridelands	PC	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September 16th**
Monsters	PC	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September 16th**
Peter Pan	PC	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September 16th**
Princess Royal Horse Show	PC	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September 16th**
Winnie the Pooh Party Time	PC	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September 16th**
Cinderella Magical Dreams	GBA	Action/Adventure	THQ	01483 767656	Open	**September 16th**
Marble Madness/Klax	GBA	Retro	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**September 16th**
102 Dalmatians Activity Centre	PC	Action/Adventure	BVG	020 8222 1413	CentreSoft	**September 16th**
Myst IV Revelation	PC	Adventure	Focus Multimedia	01889 570156	Interactive Ideas	**September 23rd**
Family Board Games	PS2	Family	Liquid Games	01933 442 660	Centresoft	**September 23rd**
Asteroids/Pong/Yars' Revenge	GBA	Retro	Zoo Digital	0114 2413700	Open	**September 23rd**
Devil May Cry 3	PS2	Action/Adventure	Capcom	020 8846 2250	Open	**September 23rd**
Warhammer Dawn of War Winter Assault	PC	RTS	THQ	01483 767 656	Advantage	**September 23rd**
Warhammer Dawn of War Game of the Year	PC	RTS	THQ	01483 767 656	Advantage	**September 23rd**
Warhammer Dawn of War Gold Edition	PC	RTS	THQ	01483 767 656	Advantage	**September 23rd**
Flying Squadron	PS2	Flight	Phoenix	+31 40 3680144	Open	**September 23rd**
Cartoon World	PS2	Kids'	Phoenix	+31 40 3680144	Open	**September 23rd**
Urban Skateboarder	PS2	Sport	Phoenix	+31 40 3680144	Open	**September 23rd**
The Ultimate Music Quiz	PS2	Quiz	Liquid Games	01933 442 660	Centresoft	**September 23rd**
The Ultimate TV & Movie Quiz	PS2	Quiz	Liquid Games	01933 442 660	Centresoft	**September 23rd**
The Ultimate Sports Quiz	PS2	Quiz	Liquid Games	01933 442 660	Centresoft	**September 23rd**
The Ultimate Trivia Quiz	PS2	Quiz	Liquid Games	01933 442 660	Centresoft	**September 23rd**
Deus Ex: Invisible War	PC	FPS	PC Gamer Presents	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September 23rd**
Championship Manager 03/04	PC	Management	PC Gamer Presents	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September 23rd**
World Championship Snooker 2005	PC	FPS	M.A.D	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September 23rd**
Hitman: Contracts	PC	Action/Adventure	M.A.D	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September 23rd**
Victorious Boxers 2	PS2	Sport	Empire	020 8343 7337	Open	**September 23rd**
Midway's Arcade Treasures 3	PS2/Xbox	Retro	Midway	020 7382 7720	Pinnacle	**September 30th**
Dragonball Z Budokai	PS2	Action/Adventure	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	**September 30th**
Neverwinter Nights Deluxe	PC	RPG	Atari	020 8222 9700	Advantage	**September 30th**
Sonic Gems Collection	PS2/GC	Arcade	Sega	020 8995 3399	Gem	**September 30th**
Taito Legends	PS2/Xbox/PC	Arcade	Empire	020 8343 7337	Open	**September 30th**
Taxi 3 Extreme Rush	PC	Racing	Fusion Labs	07933 682 007	Pinnacle	**September**
The Elder Scrolls III: Morrowind	PC	RPG	Sold Out	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September**
Commandos 3	PC	Strategy	Sold Out	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September**
Conflict Desert Storm 2	PC	Tactical Shooter	Sold Out	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September**
Republic	PC	RTS	Sold Out	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September**
Tomb Raider: Angel of Darkness	PC	Action/Adventure	Sold Out	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September**
Emperor	PC	Strategy	Sold Out	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September**
FarCry	PC	FPS	PC Gamer Presents	0845 234 4242	Mastertronic	**September**

MARGIN MAKER

MCV's guide to the latest profit spinners...

Sin City

RELEASED: SEPT 26TH
FORMAT: DVD
DISTRIBUTOR: BUENA VISTA
CONTACT: 0131 477 4445

IN THE current tough retail environment, it's all the more important for retailers to branch out and diversify into other products. Gamers by their nature are often technologically aware and culturally savvy. Perhaps they're not the sort to buy into your typical 'chick-flick', but the odds are they are the sort to go for an ultra-stylised, hyper-violent, star-studded film noir flick.

Sin City, if nothing else, is painfully modern. Its monochrome visuals belie its contemporary stylings. Whilst stars like Bruce Willis and Mickey Rourke are all present and correct, this is not a movie about its protagonists. What it is about is extreme violence, distinctive visual style and an exaggerated sense of reality. A bit like most games, really. *Sin City* is already set to attain cult status and is likely to be bought by all who enjoyed it at the cinema.

"In God We Trust"

EXTRA

Stars & Stripes

Price 5c

"From the Developers of Prisoner of War"

Volume 1 | Release Date: September 9th 1943 | Amherst, Virginia

HOW CAN YOU CONTRIBUTE TO THE WAR EFFORT?
Ask Us: 01933 446420

PILOT DOWN!

Family & Friends hold midnight vigil for his safe return

Local boy William Foster, member of the US Army Air Force, has been shot down while on active duty over enemy territory. Billy, as he is known to his family, is thought to have been on board a B24 bomber that crash landed after being heavily damaged by enemy fire. Other USAAF aircrews report seeing at least two crew members bail out of the B24, and so it could be that Bill Foster survived the destruction of his plane and is now caught behind enemy lines.

William Foster is a relatively new recruit to the 392nd Bomb Group, 8th Air Force, stationed in England. According to members of his squadron he recently replaced a co-pilot in a close-knit crew. As in many close units, William was said to have been regularly teased about being the rookie on the crew due to his inexperience and lack of combat hours.

However the young airman is known to be popular among his crewmates, and while not the most athletic of soldiers, has impressed his superiors with his intelligence and sheer determination to succeed.

William's mother is confident that these character traits will stand him in good stead. "My Billy is going to be just fine," she told this reporter. "He'll relish this challenge and approach it as an adventure. He certainly won't be scared of taking on those Nazis!"

Bill Foster: Missing US Airman. Can you help him?

The USAAF has an excellent record on returning missing aircrew to active duty. Helped by the French resistance, many downed crewmembers make their way to neutral or allied territory to once again join the fight for freedom. I'm sure all our readers will join with us in our hopes and prayers for Billy Foster's family and the swift return of our local hero.

If you are a journalist and not already one of the many spreading the word of Bill's plight, contact: Mark or Lee at Bastion, 0207 490 1323.

CAMPAIGN NEWS: LATEST FROM THE FRONTLINE

DUE TO STRIKE DEEP INTO OCCUPIED TERRITORY, BEFORE NEXT MONTH IS OUT:

- *Movie and Trailer cover mounted on all leading specialist magazines*
- *4-Week Satellite TV Campaign from Launch Weekend*
- *Over 500,000 direct mailers*
- *500,000 inserts in key specialist and lifesyle press*
- *Games Radar site takeover, TVG rebranding, and broad internet advertising*
- *Washroom advertising in top shopping centres nationwide*
- *Print advertising in specialist and lifestyle press*
- *On-street guerrilla marketing*
- *Solid PR coverage of reviews and competitions across specialist and lifestyle media (press, web, TV, radio)*

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"Solid stealth effort... with several heaped teaspoons of style and atmosphere."
PSW

"For £30, this WWII adventure could be a real Yankee-Doodle Dandy..."
Games Radar

"Pilot Down seems like it'll be capable of merging period authenticity with good gamplay and originality."
PSM2

"Pilot Down is shaping up to be an appealing experience for fans of stealth and WWII alike."
Totalvideogames.com

16+ www.pegi.info

PC DVD | PlayStation.2

www.pilotdowngame.com

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PILOT DOWN
BEHIND ENEMY LINES

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RELEASED DATE: SEPTEMBER 9TH 2005

RETAIL ONLY CHARTS

OFFICIAL UK CHARTS

OFFICIAL CHART POSTER WITH EVERY ISSUE

GAMECUBE [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1		**RESIDENT EVIL 4** DEVELOPER: CAPCOM PUBLISHER: CAPCOM	
2	5	MADAGASCAR	ACTIVISION
3	7	MARIO PARTY 6	NINTENDO
4	6	STAR FOX ASSAULT	NINTENDO
5	3	KILLER 7	CAPCOM
6	2	CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY	TAKE 2
7	4	FANTASTIC FOUR	ACTIVISION
8	9	MARIO POWER TENNIS	NINTENDO
9	8	THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: FOUR SWORDS	NINTENDO
10	10	DONKEY KONGA 2	NINTENDO

NINTENDO DS [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1		**SUPER MARIO 64** DEVELOPER: NINTENDO PUBLISHER: NINTENDO	
2	NEW	ASPHALT: URBAN GT	UBISOFT
3	2	BOMBERMAN DS	UBISOFT
4	3	NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2	EA
5	5	MADAGASCAR	ACTIVISION
6	4	SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY	UBISOFT
7	6	WARIOWARE TOUCHED!	NINTENDO
8	7	STAR WARS III: REVENGE OF THE SITH	LUCASARTS
9	8	GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT	EA
10	NEW	YOSHI TOUCH & GO	NINTENDO

GAME BOY ADVANCE [FULL

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1		**MADAGASCAR** DEVELOPER: TOYS FOR BOB/VICARIOUS VISIONS/BEENOX PUBLISHER: ACTIVISION	
2	5	CRASH AND SPYRO SUPER PACK VOL 2	VU GAMES
3	3	THE SIMPSONS: ROAD RAGE	THQ
4	5	THE INCREDIBLES	THQ
5	6	FANTASTIC FOUR	ACTIVISION
6	7	LEGO STAR WARS	EIDOS/GIANT
7	9	SCOOBY-DOO! MYSTERY MAYHEM	THQ
8	8	POKÉMON LEAF GREEN	NINTENDO
9	12	CRASH AND SPYRO SUPER PACK VOL 1	VU GAMES
10	13	SONIC ADVANCE 3	SEGA

[1]

[2]

[3]

[4]

[5]

[ENTERTAINMENT - FULL PRICE]

TOP 40 ALL

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1		**BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005** DEVELOPER: SWORDFISH STUDIOS PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS	
2	2	MADAGASCAR	ACTIVISION
3	3	FANTASTIC FOUR	ACTIVISION
4	8	JUICED	THQ
5	5	CRICKET 2005	EA
6	4	CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY	TAKE 2
7	10	GTA: SAN ANDREAS	ROCKSTAR
8	7	MOH: EUROPEAN ASSAULT	EA
9	11	PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4	KONAMI
10	9	DESTROY ALL HUMANS!	THQ
11	24	WORMS 4: MAYHEM	CODEMASTERS
12	6	LEGO STAR WARS	EIDOS/GIANT
13	NEW	SONIC 3D	XPLOSIV
14	16	NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND 2	EA
15	13	BATTLEFIELD 2	EA
16	20	THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN	VU GAMES
17	15	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5	EIDOS
18	22	THE INCREDIBLES	THQ
19	21	SIMPSONS: HIT AND RUN	EA
20	14	CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR	ACTIVISION

PLAYSTATION 2 [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1		**BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005** DEVELOPER: SWORDFISH STUDIOS PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS	
2	2	FANTASTIC FOUR	ACTIVISION
3	8	JUICED	THQ
4	5	CRICKET 2005	EA
5	4	MADAGASCAR	ACTIVISION
6	3	CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY	TAKE 2
7	6	MEDAL OF HONOR: EUROPEAN ASSAULT	EA
8	9	DESTROY ALL HUMANS!	THQ
9	14	WORMS 4: MAYHEM	CODEMASTERS
10	10	TEKKEN 5	SONY

[ANALYSIS]

To ensure we could get this new-look MCV to you in time for GME, we weren't able to include the latest charts in this issue. Apologies. After weeks of little movement over the quiet summer months, last Friday we gratefully welcomed the first of the pre-Christmas releases as the Q4 rush finally begins. Expect Ubisoft's *Ghost Recon 2: Summit Strike* (Xbox) to chart highly thanks to its budget price. It will also be interesting to see how Ubisoft's *187 Ride or Die* (PS2/Xbox) performs. Other releases include *Super Monkey Ball Deluxe* (PS2/Xbox) and *Resident Evil Outbreak 2* (PS2).

Ben Parfitt

FORMATS

[SOURCE] ELSPA ChartTrack

Highest New Entry | Highest Top 40 Climber

21	17	STAR WARS III: REVENGE OF THE SITH	LUCASARTS
22	27	PREMIER MANAGER 2005-2006	2DD DIGITAL PUBLISHING
23	RE	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005	SEGA
24	18	STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT	LUCASARTS
25	23	TEKKEN 5	SONY
26	26	SPLINTER CELL: CHAOS THEORY	UBISOFT
27	25	GOD OF WAR	SONY
28	29	THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY	EA
29	28	HALF-LIFE 2	VU GAMES
30	33	FIFA 2005	EA
31	32	THE URBZ: SIMS IN THE CITY	EA
32	12	THE SIMS 2	EA
33	37	SPIDER-MAN 2	ACTIVISION
34	30	GOLDENEYE: ROGUE AGENT	EA
35	RE	THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY	SONY
36	34	GUILD WARS	NCSOFT
37	35	RATCHET & CLANK	SONY
38	31	SHARK TALE	ACTIVISION
39	NEW	ICC: ASHES 2005	XPLOSIV
40	36	SONIC HEROES	SEGA

XBOX [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1	1	**BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005** DEVELOPER: SWORDFISH STUDIOS PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS	
2	2	GTA: SAN ANDREAS	ROCKSTAR
3	5	JUICED	THQ
4	4	DESTROY ALL HUMANS!	THQ
5	3	FANTASTIC FOUR	ACTIVISION
6	14	WORMS 4: MAYHEM	CODEMASTERS
7	6	FORZA MOTORSPORT	MICROSOFT
8	10	CRICKET 2005	EA
9	8	MEDAL OF HONOR: EUROPEAN ASSAULT	EA
10		SID MEIER'S PIRATES	TAKE 2

PC CD-ROM [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1	1	**BATTLEFIELD 2** DEVELOPER: DIGITAL ILLUSIONS PUBLISHER: EA	
2	8	FOOTBALL MANAGER 2005	SEGA
3	4	THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY	EA
4	3	HALF-LIFE 2	VU GAMES
5	1	SIMS 2	EA
6	5	GUILD WARS	NCSOFT EUROPE
7	6	WORLD OF WARCRAFT	VU GAMES
8	11	LOTR: BATTLE FOR MIDDLE EARTH	EA
9	7	CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5	EIDOS
10	9	ROME: TOTAL WAR	ACTIVISION

PC CD-ROM [BUDGET PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1	1	**SONIC 3D** DEVELOPER: SONIC TEAM PUBLISHER: XPLOSIV	
2	1	ICC: ASHES 05	XPLOSIV
3	NEW	MICROSOFT FLIGHT SIMULATOR 98	XPLOSIV
4	NEW	BIG MUTHA TRUCKERS	XPLOSIV
5	3	THE SIMS	EA
6	2	INFINITE SUDOKU	FOCUS MULTIMEDIA
7	4	SIM CITY 3000: UK EDITION	SOLD OUT
8	8	COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 2	SOLD OUT
9	7	MOH: PACIFIC ASSAULT	EA
10	6	THEME HOSPITAL	SOLD OUT

PLAYSTATION 2 [BUDGET PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER
1	1	**PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4** DEVELOPER: KONAMI PUBLISHER: KONAMI	
2	4	THE SIMPSONS: HIT & RUN	VU GAMES
3	20	THE GETAWAY: BLACK MONDAY	SONY
4	7	PREMIER MANAGER 2005-2006	2DD DIGITAL PUBLISHING
5	6	RAYCHET & CLANK 3	SONY
6	3	CALL OF DUTY: FINEST HOUR	ACTIVISION
7	10	KILLZONE	SONY
8	14	ATHENS 2004	SONY
9	2	STAR WARS: BATTLEFRONT	LUCASARTS
10	9	WWE SMACKDOWN! VS RAW	THQ

THAT WAS THEN

[10 YEARS AGO]

1.	*BRIAN LARA CRICKET*, MD	CODEMASTERS
2.	*THEME PARK*, MD, JA	OCEAN
3.	*MORTAL KOMBAT 2*, GA, GG, MD, SN, SG, MX	ACCLAIM
4.	*FIFA SOCCER 95*, MD	EA
5.	*MICRO MACHINES*, MD, GA, SN, GG, SG, N	CODEMASTERS
6.	*ZELDA – LINK'S AWAKENING*, GA	NINTENDO
7.	*RISE OF THE ROBOTS*, MD, SN, GG	ACCLAIM
8.	*PGA TOUR GOLF 3*, MD	EA
9.	*SUPER ROBOTERMAN 2*, SN	VIRGIN
10.	*STREET RACER*, SN, MD	UBISOFT

[5 YEARS AGO]

1.	*POKÉMON YELLOW*, GB	NINTENDO
2.	*DRIVER*, PSX, PC, GBC	INFOGRAMES
3.	*X-MEN MUTANT ACADEMY*, PSX, GBC	ACTIVISION
4.	*T. HAWK'S SKATEBOARDING*, PSX, DC, GC, N64	ACTIVISION
5.	*POKÉMON BLUE*, GB	NINTENDO
6.	*POKÉMON RED*, GB	NINTENDO
7.	*DEUS EX*, PC	EIDOS
8.	*BATMAN*, PSX, GBC, PC	UBISOFT
9.	*THE SIMS*, PC	EA
10.	*FORMULA 1 GRAND PRIX 3*, PC	HASBRO

[1 YEAR AGO]

1.	*DOOM 3*, PC	ACTIVISION
2.	*ATHENS 2004*, PS2	SONY
3.	*SPIDER-MAN 2*, PS2, XBOX, GBA, GC	ACTIVISION
4.	*RAINBOW SIX BLACK ARROW*, XBOX	UBISOFT
5.	*DOA3OK*, PS2, XBOX	ATARI
6.	*SHREK 2*, PS2, GBA, GC, XBOX	ACTIVISION
7.	*NEED FOR SPEED UNDERGROUND*, PS2, XBOX, GC, PC	EA
8.	*CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK*, XBOX	VU GAMES
9.	*MCAFEE INTERNET SECURITY 2004*, PC	SYMANTEC
10.	*FORMULA 1 '04*, PS2	SONY

INDIE CHARTS

Charts compiled by Game Guide/Complete EPOS Solutions. For more information about Complete EPOS Solutions call 01543 370002. For more information about the Game Guide call 01606 836347.

[ENTERTAINMENT - FULL PRICE]

ALL FORMATS

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE/FORMAT	PUBLISHER	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1	**BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005** DEVELOPER: SWORDFISH PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS		
2	2	**WORMS 4: MAYHEM** PS2	CODEMASTERS	9
3	8	**WORLD OF WARCRAFT** PC	VU GAMES	2
4	4	**BATTLEFIELD 2** PC	EA	4
5	7	**FANTASTIC FOUR** PS2	ACTIVISION	8
6	6	**STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT** PS2	LUCASARTS	-
7	15	**DYNASTY WARRIORS 5** PS2	KOEI	-
8	12	**CRICKET 2005** PS2	EA	4
9	3	**BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005** XBOX	CODEMASTERS	8
10	RE	**JUICED** XBOX	THQ	-
11	NEW	**POKÉMON LEAF GREEN** GBA	NINTENDO	-
12	NEW	**FINAL FANTASY VIII** PSONE	SONY	-
13	10	**DESTROY ALL HUMANS** PS2	THQ	3
14	RE	**TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT** PS2	EA	3
15	11	**HALO 2: MULTIPLAYER PACK** XBOX	MICROSOFT	3
16	18	**CHARLIE:CHOCOLATE FACTORY** PS2	TAKE 2	6
17	NEW	**THE SIMS: TRIPLE DELUXE** PC	EA	-
18	NEW	**THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY** PC	EA	-
19	17	**JUICED** PS2	THQ	3
20	NEW	**POKER MASTERS** PS2	LIQUID GAMES	-

PLAYSTATION 2 [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER	WEEKS ON CHART
1	2	**BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005** DEVELOPER: SWORDFISH PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS		
2	2	**WORMS 4: MAYHEM**	CODEMASTERS	9
3	5	**FANTASTIC FOUR**	ACTIVISION	2
4	4	**STAR WARS BATTLEFRONT**	LUCASARTS	-
5	10	**DYNASTY WARRIORS**	KOEI	-
6	7	**CRICKET 2005**	EA	4
7	6	**DESTROY ALL HUMANS**	THQ	8
8	NEW	**TIMESPLITTERS: FUTURE PERFECT**	EA	-
9	NEW	**CHARLIE: CHOCOLATE FACTORY**	TAKE 2	6
10	NEW	**JUICED**	THQ	3

XBOX [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1	**BRIAN LARA CRICKET 2005** DEVELOPER: SWORDFISH PUBLISHER: CODEMASTERS		
2	6	**JUICED**	THQ	3
3	3	**HALO 2 MULTIPLAYER MAP PACK**	MICROSOFT	-
4	2	**WORMS 4: MAYHEM**	CODEMASTERS	6
5	5	**CRICKET 2005**	EA	8
6	NEW	**DESTROY ALL HUMANS**	THQ	4
7	NEW	**FIFA FOOTBALL 2005**	EA	-
8	10	**WWE WRESTLEMANIA 21: LEGEND**	THQ	-
9	7	**SID MEIER'S PIRATES**	TAKE 2	10
10	NEW	**SUDEKI**	MICROSOFT	-

GAMECUBE [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1	**SUPER MONKEY BALL 2** DEVELOPER: AM2 PUBLISHER: SEGA		
2	3	**RESIDENT EVIL 4**	CAPCOM	1
3	4	**STAR FOX: ASSAULT**	NINTENDO	4
4	5	**KILLER 7**	CAPCOM	5
5	NEW	**TALES OF SYMPHONIA**	NINTENDO	-

NINTENDO DS [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1	**RIDGE RACER** DEVELOPER: NAMCO PUBLISHER: NINTENDO		
2	3	**SUPER MARIO 64**	NINTENDO	1
3	NEW	**SPACE INVADER REVOLUTION**	RISING STAR	-
4	NEW	**YOSHI TOUCH & GO**	NINTENDO	10
5	NEW	**ZOO KEEPER**	NINTENDO	-

PC CD-ROM [FULL PRICE]

THIS WEEK	LAST WEEK	TITLE	PUBLISHER	WEEKS ON CHART
1	1	**WORLD OF WARCRAFT** DEVELOPER: BLIZZARD PUBLISHER: VU GAMES		
2	1	**BATTLEFIELD 2**	EA	1
3	NEW	**THE SIMS: TRIPLE PACK**	EA	-
4	NEW	**THE SIMS 2: UNIVERSITY**	EA	3
5	NEW	**ROLLER COASTER TYCOON 3**	ATARI	-

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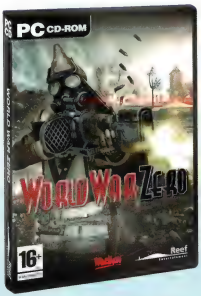

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NINTENDO HANDHELD BRANDS FOCUS

Coverdate: Friday September 16th

● Q4 DS & GAMEBOY GUIDE

The PSP might be grabbing all the headlines in its launch week, but it's Nintendo that still sets the standard in the handheld arena. MCV has teamed up with the firm to create a dedicated supplement highlighting the Q4 marketing plans and software highlights for the DS and GBA, as well as a focus on the GBA Micro launch.

CONTACTS

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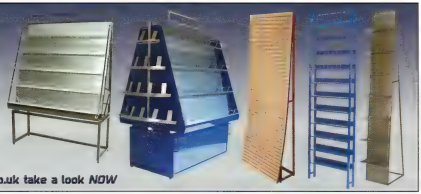

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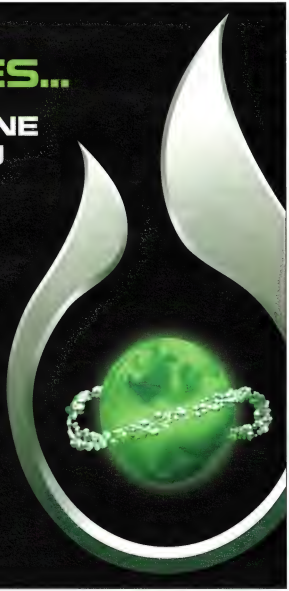

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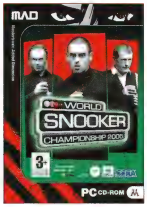

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LETTERS

Prism Leisure reiterates concerns over the supermarkets' policies, calls for campaign of complaint and defends the indies' right to moan; charity appeal hailed as unqualified success...

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"Bully boy tactics"

IT SEEMS TO me that no matter which trade magazine you read – be it connected to the electrical, convenience or entertainment industry – that everyone is suffering from the brunt of the four major supermarkets; not just independent retailers, but also the supermarket suppliers. This is a result of their bully boy tactics to get prices lower and lower and suppliers not willing to stand up to them.

I have also read several articles that seem to further back up my letter in *MCV*, stating that if prices are consistently driven lower and margins are tighter then manufacturers and publishers may be pushed into having to forgo quality to be able to meet the four's pricing requirements.

The Office Of Fair Trading is also not willing to uphold any complaints that have been made against 'the four' by its suppliers due to OFT not accepting anonymous complaints. Companies are in jeopardy of going bust but can not risk losing the four's business, so are unwilling to put their name to a complaint. It seems ridiculous that the supermarkets can be allowed to have such a stranglehold over UK industry and the Government be so unwilling to do anything about it.

The Government believes that the 'Big Four' are good for our economy but I don't see how four companies monopolising not only their industries but also industries outside their main can be good for the economy, especially as this pricing war is restricting the economy.

It is all very well people saying that there are some independents who are doing well, but the majority aren't. Not only do we have to consider the retailers, but how about all the sales staff and warehouse staff employed by distribution who are at risk of losing their livelihoods? How many distributors can survive on a few independent retailers? None. Being involved with not only games but DVD and audio, I am able to see the full effect it is having on all these Independents. The rich are getting richer; the poor are getting poorer.

I totally disagree with the article about Tesco's Simon Boyd (*MCV 19/8*) for saying that they will not be taking customers away from specialists. They inevitably will and I think that this has been their plan all along. They are obviously not going to say that to the very people whose businesses they are looking to destroy.

As it is – and always has been – everyone needs to eat and therefore at some point someone from every household in the UK enters one of the supermarkets' stores. They are relying on this to gain their market share, and by selling products at almost cost are trying to take customers away from the High Street. If they were not trying to do this, then why do they need to crash the RRP of products to a point where only a few can compete?

I believe that the only way forward is for anyone with a grievance against the 'Big Four' to stand up and be counted; to contact their local MPs and also the Office of Fair Trading and make the Government realise that this can not be allowed to continue.

I am a bit surprised at some of the attitudes which I have recently seen in *MCV*. Independents moan excessively? This may be so, but I believe that they have a right to moan – after all it is their livelihood and businesses being put at risk, I am sure if everyone was in the same situation they would feel the same way. I also don't think it right for people to point the finger and say they should not import grey stock, especially when they are doing it themselves, as this can save £2-3 per title compared to that of official distribution, even though it is exactly the same product.

In what way can official distribution warrant the extra cost? The only way is by threatening allocation of new hardware such as the imminent PSP launch, where they silently would only increase your PSP allocation dependent on the number Sony PSP games that you purchase. Not to mention the rather unfair allocation – some indies receiving 100 units whilst others receive one unit.

I do think that there is a way around this; maybe something that would not be to the liking of distribution but would aid independent retailers. But people need to look and be willing to consider ideas from outside the boundaries they have been set and be open to new ideas.

Julian Van Marle
Prism Leisure

"Journalists can barely spell"

Perturbed but anonymous publisher wonders if shoddy editorial standards might be behind ABC drops, the fule

THE SPECIALIST press' insistence that the almost wholesale decline of its ABCs is down to the lack of 'big name' games released during the audited period is frankly ridiculous.

"No *Halo 2*!" they cried. "No *GTA*!" they whinged. Let's leave aside the fact that their editors frequently bemoan the lack of innovation in gaming whilst the bean-counters admit they rely on sequels to keep them in a job – fact is, during this period we've had news on Xbox 360, PlayStation 3 and, to a lesser extent, Revolution and PSP. The future, in other words. Yet apparently that's not enough to persuade punters to part with their fivers in exchange for information regurgitated from the Internet. Is that really a surprise?

Quality writing and editorial should be the selling points of our magazines – not false exclusives and Other People's Videos on over-priced 'free' DVDs. *Edge* realises this, and is the only magazine to have enjoyed a rise.

The threat to printed press from the Internet should not be understated. But whilst the vast majority of Internet journalists can barely spell, they're winning a war against the professionals.

There needs to be a shift in attitude across the board for the specialist press to survive. Stop pressuring journalists to churn out page after endless page of hype and poor lads' magazine jokes; give them some proper time to appreciate the medium and offer insight and opinion which can excite and inform our readers. Because if the specialist press continues to illustrate such wholesale contempt for its audience, is it really any surprise they're deserting them in droves?

A concerned publisher

"I will be back"

AT A TIME when we continue to hear of the downside to the games companies, what with 'Hot Coffee Gate', etc, then I am glad to be the bearer of better tidings.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all my many friends within the games companies for their continued support of the various areas that I help and to inform them that I have now passed the £1 million mark of games and goodies passed onto the many schools, hospitals, etc. with your best wishes.

It is always a pleasure to be linked with the games companies and the work that you help me to do is never more appreciated than by the children who receive all the wonderful donations that you pass onto myself to disperse amongst them. Many a child in a hospital or during wet afternoons in school are delighted to play the most up-to-date games. And for all the fun and cheer that your donations bring then I am, as always, in your debt.

For your continued support, I thank you and for all that you have done in the past, and I hope in the you will do in the future, then I again thank you.

All too often we do not hear of the good that the industry does but to hear that the children that I pass the games on to have enjoyed them – be they for play or education – then I feel that we are doing something good and worthwhile.

I hope to see you at the Games Market Europe trade show and thank you in person.

To those who know me, I will be back. And to those who at this time don't, I will see you soon. Should you like to help with the many areas that I deal with then please contact me as I can never have enough items to pass onto the children with your best wishes.

John Hanvidge
Glasgow
HANVIDGE@aol.com

[QUOTE OF THE WEEK]

"It worries me that other publishers perform great one year and then seem to have exhausted themselves the next."
Paul Jackson, EA P4

OFF THE RECORD

Is Butt about to poach more Highbury bods? What will Hillary Clinton make of the hidden mini-game MCV has discovered in Nintendogs? And what is it with all these PR geezers trying to get off with the promo girls? Off The Record investigates...

SEND YOUR COMMENTS TO OFFTHERECORD@INTENTMEDIA.CO.UK

HELLO BABY
Congratulations to Highbury's Nick Roberts and wife Stephanie, who are celebrating the birth of baby Bennett Nicholas Roberts – who clocked up 8lb 11oz on the scales when he popped out on July 25th. "I've been trying to educate him in the joys of the ZX Spectrum, but he's only interested in what's coming up for the PlayStation 3 and thinks his dad's retro gaming is just embarrassing," a sleepless and delirious Roberts stammered, clearly still amazed a girl agreed to unprotected sex with a member of the specialist games press. Suggestions that Imagine's Damian Butt has already attempted to poach young Bennett for his new *360* mag were fiercely denied.

BUMMED OUT Proving that DS does in fact stand for 'Doggy Style', some Photoshop-abusing wag has turned his artistic flair to Nintendo's imminent DS phenomenon, *Nintendogs*. While the acclaimed pet simulator allows virtual dog owners to perform all manner of doggy duties, like walkies and tummy-tickling, Off The Record does not recall seeing a 'Give The Dog A Bone Mode' on the features list. What next? Nintendogging? If nothing else, it's a new use for the ever-innovative touch screen. "How do you like it, Rover?" "Ruff!"

SPEAKING OF DOGS What better way to celebrate your birthday than by hanging out at a Christmas games party, surrounded by Santa's Little Slappers? That's precisely what Sega's PR pervert Stefan McGarry *(pictured)* did at Nintendo's Q4 bash last week. And from the look on Stefan's face, it wasn't just Christmas that came early.

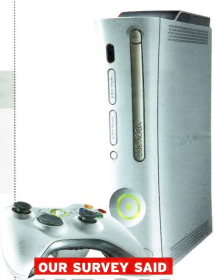
CLUBBING TOGETHER
Coke-snorting London trendies will be in for a shock on October 15th as games

Give The Dog A Bone Mode? What next? Nintendogging? If nothing else, it's a new use for the touch screen.

invade the 333 club for the Atari Vs Sega night. The two publishers have come together to 'celebrate in an alternative way the typically garish and often dull and un-cool video game parties,' with Deadly Avenger on the one and twos. If past games bashes are any indication, this means failed models in hotpants offering drinks to sweaty men in suits, while journos scan the area like vultures for freebies. No change there, then.

SCALING HEIGHTS The ESC's hugely impressive sponsored ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro has inspired Staffordshire-based publisher Focus to take on the life-threatening might of England and Wales' highest peak Mount Snowdon. The only fractionally smaller mountain, which boasts a 3,560 foot climb to the top, will be scaled by the crack team of volunteers on Saturday September 3rd. It's worth stopping to think about the Focus team doing something worthwhile with their lives that Saturday morning as you try not to bring up last night's mix of alcohol and kebab meat. Well done them.

gamesradar.com



OUR SURVEY SAID

XBOX 360 LAUNCH

Q Which version of Xbox 360 will you be buying?

Core System (£210)
7%

Premium edition (£280)
63%

Neither
31%

Total number of votes cast: **7,156**

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Intent launched its fifth trade magazine, **Mobile Entertainment**, earlier this year. For more information go to www.mobile-ent.biz

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THE OFFICIAL UK GAMESCHART

ELSPA Entertainment and Leisure Software Publishers Association | ChartTrack | MCV

Week Ending 27-08-05

POSITION	LAST WK	TITLE/ FORMAT	DEVELOPER/PUBLISHER
1		**BRIAN LARA INTERNATIONAL CRICKET 2005** PS2, XBOX, PC	SWORDFISH STUDIOS/CODEMASTERS
2	2	**MADAGASCAR** PS2, XBOX, GBA, DS	TOYS FOR BOB/VICARIOUS VISIONS/ACTIVISION
3	NEW	**TOM CLANCY'S GHOST RECON 2 - SUMMIT STRIKE** XBOX	RED STORM ENTERTAINMENT/UBISOFT
4	10	**DESTROY ALL HUMANS** PS2, XBOX	PANDEMIC/THQ
5	12	**LEGO STAR WARS** PS2, XBOX, GBA, PC	TRAVELLER'S TALES/EIDOS/GIANT
6	4	**JUICED** PS2, XBOX, PC	JUICE GAMES/THQ
7	8	**MEDAL OF HONOR: EUROPEAN ASSAULT** PS2, XBOX, GC	EA/EA
8	3	**FANTASTIC 4** PS2, XBOX, GBA, GC	SEVEN STUDIOS/BEENOX/ACTIVISION
9	13	**SONIC 3D** PC	SONIC TEAM/XPLOSIV
10	6	**CHARLIE AND THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY** PS2, XBOX, GBA, PC	HIGH VOLTAGE/TAKE 2
11	17	**CHAMPIONSHIP MANAGER 5** PS2, XBOX, PC	GUSTO GAMES/BEAUTIFUL GAME STUDIOS/EIDOS
12	9	**PRO EVOLUTION SOCCER 4** PS2, XBOX, PC	KCET/KONAMI
13	5	**CRICKET 2005** PS2, XBOX, PC	EA/EA
14	7	**GRAND THEFT AUTO: SAN ANDREAS** PS2, XBOX, PC	ROCKSTAR NORTH/ROCKSTAR
15	●	**RESIDENT EVIL: OUTBREAK FILE 2** PS2	CAPCOM/CAPCOM
16	●	**SUPER MONKEY BALL DELUXE** PS2, XBOX	SEGA/SEGA
17	15	**BATTLEFIELD 2** PC	DIGITAL ILLUSIONS/EA
18	16	**THE SIMPSONS: HIT AND RUN** PS2, XBOX, PC	RADICAL ENTERTAINMENT/VU GAMES
19	14	**NEED FOR SPEED: UNDERGROUND 2** PS2, XBOX, DS, PC	EA/EA
20	11	**WORMS 4: MAYHEM** PS2, XBOX, PC	TEAM 17/CODEMASTERS

Highest New Entry | Highest Top 20 Climber | New Entry | Re-Entry

COMING SOON

September 23rd
WARHAMMER 40,000: DAWN OF WAR GAME OF THE YEAR EDITION THQ
Formats: PC **Tel:** 01483 767656
This features four maps unique to the GOTY Edition, four maps previously only available online and new online features like Observer Mode and Friends list.

September 30th
ROME TOTAL WAR: BARBARIAN INVASION Sega
Formats: PC **Tel:** 01279 822822
The massively anticipated expansion pack to the greatest strategy game of all time, Rome: Total War.

During September
ARCHER MACLEAN'S MERCURY Atari
Formats: PSP **Tel:** 020 8222 9700
Archer Maclean's highly-addictive puzzler makes its UK debut for the launch of Sony's new handheld, PSP.

October 7th
KINGDOM UNDER FIRE: HEROES Deep Silver
Formats: XB **Tel:** 0870 027 0977
A vastly enhanced sequel to the excellent and groundbreaking action-RTS, Kingdom Under Fire: The Crusaders.

October
ULTIMATE SPIDER-MAN Activision
Formats: PS2, XB, GC, DS, PC **Tel:** 0121 625 3388
Take on the role of the world's most famous superhero, Marvel's Spider-Man, and one of his most menacing nemeses, Venom, in an original storyline.

GAME OF THE WEEK GAME OF THE WEEK GAME OF THE WEEK GAME OF THE WEEK

Spartan Total Warrior Sega

Formats: PS2, XB, NGC Release: October 7th RRP: £34.99

An orphan, raised by the Spartans to fight, chosen by the gods to win, you must prove your worth in the most epic battles ever seen on console. Fight alongside thousands of fearless warriors, amid blood soaked battlefields. Nothing can stop you, not the might of Rome, the wrath of mythical monsters or the evil of black magicians. Master skills, god-given powers and legendary weapons to follow your destiny from Warrior to Hero - to Legend.